



No. LXII.] **Contents** [DECEMBER 1887

	PAGE
Eve. Chapters XIV.-XVII.	113
By the Author of 'John Herring,' 'Mehalah,' &c.	
The Gold Fields of the Transvaal	135
By GEORGE J. NATHAN	
The Pixies' Garden	152
By E. NESBIT	
Grey Fur: a Week in the Life of a Poor	
Governess.	155
By E. GERARD, Author of 'Reata'	
Of Human Incapacity	191
By A. K. H. B.	
A Prison Song	199
By D. J. ROBERTSON	
Chanticleer	201
By W. H. HUDSON	
One Traveller Returns.—V.	211
By DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY and HENRY HERMAN	

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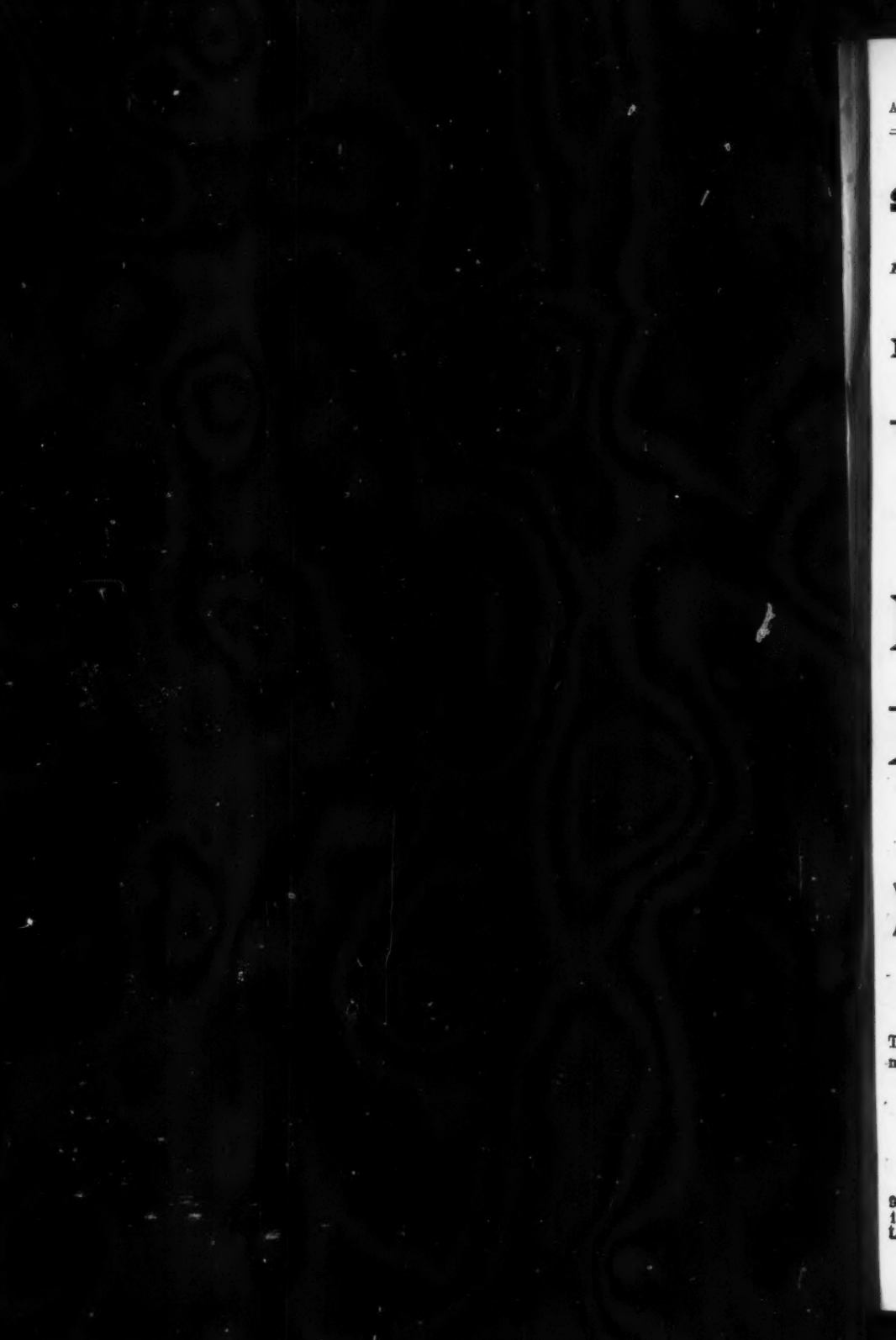
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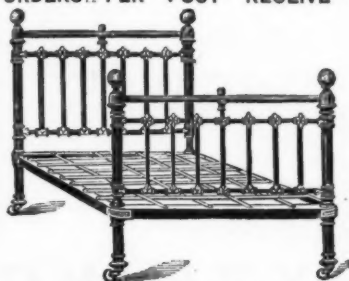
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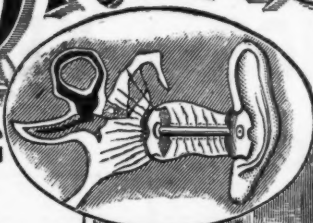
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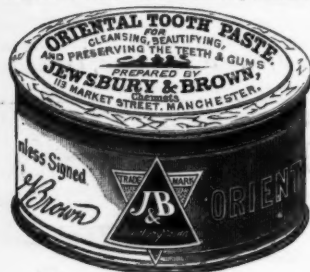
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DECEMBER 1887.

CONTENTS.

EVE. By the Author of 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' &c.	PAGE 113
Chapter XIV.— <i>A Sine qua non.</i>	
" XV.—At the Quay.	
" XVI.—Watt.	
" XVII.—Forget-me-not!	
THE GOLD FIELDS OF THE TRANSVAAL. By GEORGE J. NATHAN	135
THE PIXIES' GARDEN. By E. NESBIT	152
GREY FUR : A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A POOR GOVERNESS. By E. GERARD, Author of 'REATA'	155
OF HUMAN INCAPACITY. By A. K. H. B.	191
A PRISON SONG. By D. J. ROBERTSON	199
CHANTICLEER. By W. H. HUDSON	201
ONE TRAVELLER RETURNS—V. By DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY and HENRY HERMAN	211
AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP. By ANDREW LANG	234

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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER 1887.

Eve.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' &c.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SINE QUA NON.

BARBARA was on her way home from Ashburton. She had attended her aunt's funeral, and knew that a little sum of about fifty pounds per annum was hers, left her by her aunt. She was occupied with her thoughts. Was there any justification for Jasper? The father was hateful. She could excuse his leaving home—that was nothing; such a home must be intolerable to a young man of spirit—but to rob his father was another matter. Barbara could not quite riddle the puzzle out in her mind. It was clear that Mr. Babb had confided the fifteen hundred pounds to Jasper, and that Jasper had made away with them. He had been taken and sent to prison at Prince's Town. Thence he had escaped, and whilst escaping had met with the accident which had brought him to become an inmate of Morwell House. Jasper's story that he had lost the money was false. He had himself taken it. Barbara could not quite make it out; she tried to put it from her. What mattered it how the robbery had been committed?—sufficient that the man who took the money was with her father. What had he done with the money? That no one but himself could tell, and that she would not ask him.

It was vain crying over spilt milk. Fifteen hundred pounds were gone, and the loss of that money might affect Eve's prospects.

Eve was already attracting admiration, but who would take her for her beauty alone? Eve, Barbara said to herself, was a jewel that must be kept in a velvet and morocco case, and must not be put to rough usage. She must have money. She must marry where nothing would be required of her but to look and be—charming.

It was clear to Barbara that Mr. Coyshe was struck with her sister, and Mr. Coyshe was a promising, pushing man, sure to make his way. If a man has a high opinion of himself he impresses others with belief in him. Mr. Jordan was loud in his praises; Barbara had sufficient sense to dislike his boasting, but she was influenced by it. Though his manner was not to her taste, she was convinced that Mr. Coyshe was a genius, and a man whose name would be known through England.

What was to be done? The only thing she could think of was to insist on her father making over Morwell to Eve on his death; as for herself—she had her fifty pounds, and she could go as house-keeper to some lady; the Duchess of Bedford would recommend her. *She* was not likely to be thought of by any man, with only fifty pounds, and with a plain face.

When Barbara reached this point she laughed, and then she sighed. She laughed because the idea of her being married was so absurd. She sighed because she was tired. Just then, quite uncalled for and unexpected, the form of Jasper Babb rose up before her mind's eye, as she had last seen him, pale, looking after her, waving his hat.

She was returning to him without a word from his father, of forgiveness, of encouragement, of love. She was scheming a future for herself and for Eve; Jasper had no future, only a horrible past, which cast a shadow forward, and took all hope out of the present, and blighted the future. If she could but have brought him a kind message, it would have inspired him to redeem his great fault, to persevere in well-doing. She knew that she would find him watching for her return with a wistful look in his dark full eyes, asking her if she brought him consolation.

Then she reproached herself because she had left his parting farewell unacknowledged. She had been ungracious; no doubt she had hurt his feelings.

She had passed through Tavistock, with her groom riding some way behind her, when she heard the sound of a trotting horse, and almost immediately a well-known voice called, 'Glad to see your face turned homewards, Miss Jordan.'

'Good evening, Mr. Coyshe.'

'Our roads run together, to my advantage. What is that you are carrying? Can I relieve you?'

'A violin. The boy is careless, he might let it fall. Besides, he is burdened with my valise and a bundle.'

'What! has your aunt bequeathed a violin to you?'

A little colour came into Barbara's cheeks, as she answered, 'I am bringing it home from over the moor.' She blushed to have to equivocate.

'I hope you have had something more substantial left you than an old fiddle,' said the surgeon.

'Thank you, my poor aunt has been good enough to leave me something comfortable, which will enable my dear father to make up to Eve for the sum that has been lost.'

'I am glad to hear it,' said Mr. Coyshe. 'Charmed!'

'By the way,' Barbara began, 'I wanted to say something to you, but I have not had the opportunity. You were quite in the wrong about the saucer of sour milk, though I admit there was a stocking—but how you saw that, passes my comprehension.'

'I did not see it, I divined it,' said the young man, with his protruding light eyes staring at her with an odd, mischievous expression in them. 'It is part of the mysteries of medicine—a faculty akin to inspiration in some doctors, that they see with their inner eyes what is invisible to the outer eye. For instance, I can see right into your heart, and I see there something that looks to me very much like the wound I patched up in Mr. Jasper's pate. Whilst his has been healing, yours has been growing worse.'

Barbara turned cold and shivered. 'For heaven's sake, Mr. Coyshe, do not say such things; you frighten me.'

He laughed.

She remained silent, uneasy and vexed. Presently she said, 'It is not true; there is nothing the matter with me.'

'But the stocking was under the sofa-cushion, and you said, Not true, at first. Wait and look.'

'Doctor, it is not true at all. That is, I have a sort of trouble or pain, but it is all about Eve. I have been very unhappy about the loss of her money, and that has fretted me greatly.'

'I foresaw it would be lost.'

'Yes, it is lost, but Eve shall be no loser.'

'Look here, Miss Jordan, a beautiful face is like a beautiful song, charming in itself, but infinitely better with an accompaniment.'

'What do you mean, Mr. Coyshe?'

'A sweet girl may have beauty and amiability, but though these may be excellent legs for the matrimonial stool, a third must be added to prevent an upset, and that—metallic.'

Barbara made no reply. The audacity and impudence of the young surgeon took the power to reply from her.

'You have not given me that fiddle,' said Coyshe.

'I am not sure you will carry it carefully,' answered Barbara; nevertheless she resigned it to him. 'When you part from me let the boy have it. I will not ride into Morwell cumbered with it.'

'A doctor,' said Coyshe, 'if he is to succeed in his profession, must be endowed with instinct as well as science. A cat does not know what ails it, but it knows when it is out of sorts; instinct teaches it to swallow a blade of grass. Instinct with us discovers the disorder, science points out the remedy. I may say without boasting that I am brimming with instinct—you have had a specimen or two—and I have passed splendid examinations, so that testifies to my science. Beer Alston cannot retain me long, my proper sphere is London. I understand the Duke has heard of me, and said to some one, whom I will not name, that if I come to town he will introduce me. If once started on the rails I must run to success. Now I want a word with you in confidence, Miss Jordan. That boy is sufficiently in the rear not to hear. You will be mum, I trust?'

Barbara slightly nodded her assent.

'I confess to you that I have been struck with your sister, Miss Eve. Who could fail to see her and not become a worshipper? She is a radiant star; I have never seen any one so beautiful, and she is as good as she is beautiful.'

'Indeed, indeed she is,' said Barbara, earnestly.

'Montecuculli said,' continued the surgeon, 'that in war three things are necessary: money; secondly, money; thirdly, money. In love it is the same. We may regret it, but it is undeniable.'

Barbara did not know what to say. The assurance of the young man imposed on her; she did not like him particularly, but he was superior in culture to most of the young men she knew, who had no ideas beyond hunting and shooting.

After a little while of consideration, she said, 'Do you think you would make Eve happy?'

'I am sure of it. I have all the instincts of the family-man in me. A man may marry a score of times and be father of fifty children, without instinct developing the special features of domes-

ticity. They are born in a man, not acquired. *Pater-familias nascitur, non fit.*'

'Have you spoken to my father?'

'No, not yet; I am only feeling my way. I don't mind telling you what brought me into notice with the Duke. He was ill last autumn when down at Endsleigh for the shooting, and his physician was sent for. I met the doctor at the Bedford Inn at Tavistock; some of us of the faculty had an evening together, and his Grace's condition was discussed, casually of course. I said nothing. We were smoking and drinking rum-and-water. There was something in his Grace's condition which puzzled his physician, and he clearly did not understand how to treat the case. I knew. I have instinct. Some rum had been spilled on the table; I dipped the end of my pipe in it, and scribbled a prescription on the mahogany. I saw the eye of the doctor on it. I have reason to believe he used my remedy. It answered. He is not ungrateful. I say no more. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Beer Alston is a bushel covering a light. Wait.'

Barbara said nothing. She rode on, deep in thought. The surgeon jogged at her side, his protruding water-blue eyes peering in all directions.

'You think your sister will not be penniless,' he said.

'I am certain she will not. Now that my aunt has provided for me, Eve will have Morwell after my father's death, and I am sure she is welcome to what comes to me from my aunt till then.'

'Halt!' exclaimed the surgeon.

Barbara drew rein simultaneously with Mr. Coyshe.

'Who are you there, watching, following us, skulking behind bushes and hedges?' shouted Coyshe.

'What is it?' asked Miss Jordan, surprised and alarmed.

The surgeon did not answer, but raised to his shoulder a stick he carried.

'Answer! Who are you? Show yourself, or I fire!'

'Doctor Coyshe,' exclaimed Barbara, 'forbear, in pity.'

'My dear Miss Jordan,' he said in a low tone, 'set your mind at rest. I have only an umbrella stick, of which all the apparatus is blown away except the catch. Who is there?' he cried, again presenting his stick.

'Once, twice!'—click went the catch. 'If I call three and fire, your blood be on your own head!'

There issued in response a scream, piercing in its shrillness, inhuman in its tone.

Barbara shuddered, and her horse plunged.

A mocking burst of laughter ensued, and then forth from the bushes into the road leaped an impish boy, who drew a bow over the catgut of a fiddle under his chin, and ran along before them, laughing, leaping, and evoking uncouth and shrill screams from his instrument.

'A pixie,' said the surgeon. 'I knew by instinct one was dodging us. Fortunately I could not lay my hand on a riding-whip this morning, and so took my old umbrella stick. Now, farewell. So you think Miss Eve will have Morwell, and the matrimonial stool its golden leg? That is right.'

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE QUAY.

ON the day of Barbara's departure Eve attended diligently to the duties of the house, and found that everything was in such order that she was content to believe that all would go on of its own accord in the old way, without her supervision, which declined next day, and was pretermitted on the third.

Jasper did not appear for mid-day dinner; he was busy on the old quay. He saw that it must be put to rights. The woods could be thinned, the coppice shredded for bark, and bark put on a barge at the bottom of the almost precipitous slope, and so sent to the tanyards at Devonport. There was waste of labour in carrying the bark up the hills and then carting it to Beer Ferris, some ten miles.

No wonder that, as Mr. Jordan complained, the bark was unremunerative. The profit was eaten up by the wasteful transport. It was the same with the timber. There was demand for oak and pine at the dockyards, and any amount was grown in the woods of Morwell.

So Jasper asked leave to have the quay put to rights, and Mr. Jordan consented. He must supervise proceedings himself, so he remained the greater part of the day by the river-edge. The ascent to Morwell House was arduous if attempted directly up the steep fall, long if he went by the zigzag through the wood. It would take him a stiff three-quarters of an hour to reach the house and half an hour to return. Accordingly he asked that his dinner might be sent him.

On the third day, to Eve's dismay, she found that she had forgotten to let him have his food, both that day and the day preceding. He had made no remark when he came back the day before.

Eve's conscience smote her—a convalescent left for nine or ten hours without food.

When she recalled her promise to send it him she found that there was no one to send. In shame and self-reproach, she packed a little basket, and resolved to carry it to him. The day was lovely. She put her broad-brimmed straw hat, trimmed with forget-me-not bows, on her head, and started on her walk.

The bank of the Tamar falls from high moorland many hundreds of feet to the water's edge. In some places the rocks rise in sheer precipices, with gullies of coppice and heather between them. Elsewhere the fall is less abrupt, and allows trees to grow, and the richness of the soil and the friable nature of the rock allows them to grow to considerable dimensions. From Morwell House a long *détour* through beautiful forest, affording peeps of mountains and water, gave the easiest descent to the quay; but Eve reserved this road for the ascent, and slid merrily down the narrow corkscrew path in the brushwood between the crags, which afforded the quickest way down to the water's edge.

'Oh, Mr. Jasper!' she exclaimed, 'I have sinned, through my forgetfulness; but see, to make amends, I have brought you a little bottle of papa's Burgundy and a wee pot of red-currant jelly for the cold mutton.'

'And you have come yourself to overwhelm me with a sense of gratitude.'

'Oh, Mr. Jasper, I am so ashamed of my naughtiness. I assure you I nearly cried. Bab—I mean Barbara—would never have forgotten. She remembers everything. Her head is a perfect store-closet, where all things are in place, and measured and weighed and on their proper shelves. You had no dinner yesterday.'

'To-day's is a banquet that makes up for all deficiencies.'

Eve liked Jasper; she had few to converse with, very few acquaintances, no friends, and she was delighted to be able to have a chat with any one, especially if that person flattered her—and who did not? Every one naturally offered incense before her; she almost demanded it as a right. The Tamar formed a little bay under a wall of rock. A few ruins marked the site of the store-houses and boatsheds of the abbots. The sun glittered on the water, forming of it a blazing mirror, and the dancing light was reflected back by the flower-wreathed rocks.

'Where are the men?' asked Eve.

'Gone into the wood to fell some pines. We must drive piles into the bed of the river, and lay beams on them for a basement.'

'Oh,' said Eve, listlessly, 'I don't understand about basements and all that.' She seated herself on a log. 'How pleasant it is here, with the flicker of the water in one's face and eyes, and a sense of being without shadow! Mr. Jasper, do you believe in pixies?'

'What do you mean, miss?'

'The little imps who live in the mines and on the moors, and play mischievous tricks on mortals. They have the nature of spirits, and yet they have human shapes, and are like old men or boys. They watch treasures and veins of ore, and when mortals approach the metal they decoy the trespassers away.'

'Like the lapwing that pretends to be wounded, and so lures you from its precious eggs. Do *you* believe in pixies?'

Eve laughed and shook her pretty head. 'I think so, Mr. Jasper, for I have seen one.'

'What was he like?'

'I do not know, I only caught glimpses of him. Do not laugh satirically. I am serious. I did see something, but I don't know exactly what I saw.'

'That is not a very convincing reason for the existence of pixies.'

Eve drew her little feet together, and folded her arms in her lap, and smiled, and tossed her head. She had taken off her hat, and the sun glorified her shining head. Jasper looked admiringly at her. 'Are you not afraid of a sunstroke, Miss Eve?'

'Oh dear, no! The sun cannot harm me. I love him so passionately. Oh, Mr. Jasper! I wish sometimes I lived far away in another country, where there are no wet days and grey skies and muggy atmospheres, and where the hedges do not drip, and the lanes do not stand ankle deep in mud, and the old walls exude moisture indoors, and one's pretty shoes do not go mouldy if not wiped over daily. I should like to be in a land like Italy, where all the people sing and dance and keep holiday, and the bells in the towers are ever ringing, and the lads have bunches of gold and silver flowers in their hats, and the girls have scarlet skirts, and the village musicians sit in a cart adorned with birch branches and ribands and roses, and the trumpets go tu-tu! and the drums bung-bung!—I have read about it, and cried for vexation that I was not there.'

'But the pixy?'

'I would banish all pixies and black Copplestones and Whishbonds; they belong to rocks and moors and darkness and storm. I hate gloom and isolation.'

'You are happy at Morwell, Miss Eve. One has but to look

in your face and see it. Not a crabbed line of care, not the track of a tear, all smoothness and smiles.'

The girl twinkled with pleasure, and said, 'That is because we are in midsummer; wait till winter and see what becomes of me. Then I am sad enough. We are shut in for five months—six months—seven almost, by mud and water. Oh, how the winds howl! How the trees toss and roar! How the rain patters! That is not pleasant. I wish, I do wish, I were a squirrel; then I would coil myself in a corner lined with moss, and crack nuts in a doze till the sun came again and woke me up with the flowers. Then I would throw out all my cracked nut-shells with both paws, and leap to the foot of a tree, run up it, and skip from branch to branch, and swing in the summer sunshine on the topmost twig. Oh, Mr. Jasper, how much wiser than we the swallows are! I would rather be a swallow than a squirrel, and sail away when I felt the first frost to the land of eternal summer, into the blazing eye of the sun.'

'But as you have no wings——'

'I sit and mope and talk to Barbara about cows and cabbages, and to father about any nonsense that comes into my head.'

'As yet you have given me no description of the pixy.'

'How can I, when I scarce saw him? I will tell you exactly what happened, if you will not curl up the corner of your lips, as though mocking me. That papa never does. I tell him all the rhodomontade I can, and he listens gravely, and frightens and abashes me sometimes by swallowing it whole.'

'Where did you see, or not see, the pixy?'

'On my way to you. I heard something stirring in the wood, and I half saw what I took to be a boy, or a little man the size of a boy. When I stood still, he stood; when I moved, I fancied he moved. I heard the crackle of sticks and the stir of the bushes. I am sure of nothing.'

'Were you frightened?'

'No; puzzled, not frightened. If this had occurred at night, it would have been different. I thought it might have been a red-deer; they are here sometimes, strayed from Exmoor, and have such pretty heads and soft eyes; but this was not. I fancied once I saw a queer little face peering at me from behind a pine tree. I uttered a feeble cry and ran on.'

'I know exactly what it was,' said Jasper, with a grave smile. 'There is a pixy lives in the Raven Rock; he has a smithy far down in the heart of the cliff, and there he works all winter at a vein

of pure gold, hammering and turning the golden cups and marsh marigolds with which to strew the pastures and water-courses in spring. But it is dull for the pixy sitting alone without light; he has no one to love and care for him, and, though the gold glows in his forge, his little heart is cold. He has been dreaming all winter of a sweet fairy he saw last summer wearing a crown of marigold, wading in cuckoo flowers, and now he has come forth to capture that fairy and draw her down into his stony palace.'

'To waste her days,' laughed Eve, 'in sighing for the sun, whilst her roses wither and her eyes grow dim, away from the twitter of the birds and the scent of the gorse. He shan't have me.' Then, after a pause, during which she gathered some marigolds and put them into her hat, she said, half seriously, half jestingly, 'Do you believe in pixies?'

'You must not ask me. I have seen but one fairy in all my life, and she now sits before me.'

'Mr. Jasper,' said Eve, with a dimple in her cheek, in recognition of the compliment,—'Mr. Jasper, do you know my mother is a mystery to me as much as pixies and fairies and white ladies?'

'No, I was not aware of that.'

'She was called, like me, Eve.'

'I had a sister of that name who is dead, and my mother's name was Eve. She is dead.'

'I did not think the name was so common,' said the girl. 'I fancied we were the only two Eves that ever were. I do not know what my mother's other name was. Is not that extraordinary?'

Jasper Babb made no reply.

'I have been reading "Undine." Have you read that story? Oh, it has made me so excited! The writer says that it was founded on what he read in an old author, and that author, Paracelsus, is one papa believes in. So, I suppose, there is some truth in the tale. The story of my mother is quite like that of Undine. One night my father heard a cry on the moor, and he went to the place, and found my mother all alone. She was with him for a year and a day, and would have stayed longer if my father could have refrained from asking her name. When he did that she was forced to leave him. She was never seen again.'

'Miss Eve, this cannot be true.'

'I do not know. That is what old Betsy Davy told me. Papa never speaks of her. He has been an altered man since she left him. He put up the stone cross on the moor at the spot where he found her. I like to fancy there was something mysterious in

her. I can't ask papa, and Bab—I mean Barbara—was too young at the time to remember anything about it.'

'This is very strange.'

'Betsy Davy says that my father was not properly married to her, because he could not get a priest to perform the ceremony without knowing what she was.'

'My dear Miss Eve, instead of listening to the cock-and-bull stories——'

'Mr. Jasper! How can you—how can you use such an expression? The story is very pretty and romantic, and not at all like things of this century. I dare say there is some truth in it.'

'I am far from any intention of offending you, dear young lady; but I venture to offer you a piece of advice. Do not listen to idle tales; do not encourage people of a lower class to speak to you about your mother; ask your father what you want to know, he will tell you; and take my word for it, romance there always must be in love, but there will be nothing of what you imagine, with a fancy set on fire by "Undine."'

Her volatile mind had flown elsewhere.

'Mr. Jasper,' she said, 'have you ever been to a theatre?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, I should like it above everything else. I dream of it. We have Inchbald's "British Theatre" in the library, and it is my dearest reading. Barbara likes a cookery book or a book on farming; I cannot abide them. Do you know what Mr. Coyshe said the other day when I was rattling on before him and papa? He said I had missed my vocation, and ought to have been on the stage. What do you think?'

'I think a loving and merciful Providence has done best to put such a precious treasure here where it can best be preserved.'

'I don't agree with you at all,' said Eve, standing up. 'I think Mr. Coyshe showed great sense. Anyhow, I should like to see a theatre—oh, above everything in the world! Papa thinks of Rome or the Holy Land; but I say—a theatre. I can't help it; I think it, and must say it. Good-bye! I have things my sister left that I must attend to. I wish she were back. Oh, Mr. Jasper, do not you?'

'Every one will be pleased to welcome her home.'

'Because I have let everything go to sixes and sevens, eh?'

'For her own sake.'

'Well, I do miss her dreadfully; do not you?'

He did not answer. She cast him another good-bye, and danced off into the wood, swinging her hat by the blue ribands.

CHAPTER XVI.

WATT.

THE air under the pines was balmy. The hot July sun brought out their resinous fragrance. Gleams of fire fell through the boughs and dappled the soil at intervals, and on these sun-flakes numerous fritillary butterflies with silver under-wings were fluttering, and countless flies were humming. The pines grew only at the bottom of the crags, and here and there in patches on the slopes. The woods were composed for the most part of oak, now in its richest, fullest foliage, the golden hue of early spring changing to the duller green of summer. Beech also abounded with their clean stems, and the soil beneath them bare of weed, and here and there a feathery birch with erect silver stem struggled up in the overgrowth to the light. The wood was full of foxgloves, spires of pink dappled bells, and of purple columbine. Wild roses grew wherever a rock allowed them to wreath in sunshine and burst into abundant bloom over its face. Eve carried her straw hat on her arm, hung by its blue ribands. She needed its shelter in the wood no more than in her father's hall.

She came to a brook, dribbling and tinkling on its way through moss and over stone. The path was fringed with blazing marigolds. Eve had already picked some, she now halted, and brimmed the extemporised basket with more of the golden flowers.

The gloom, the fragrant air, the flicker of colour made her think of the convent chapel at Lanherne, whither she had been sent for her education, but whence, having pined under the restraint, she had been speedily removed. As she walked she swung her hat like a censer. From it rose the fresh odour of flowers, and from it dropped now and then a marigold like a burning cinder. Scarce thinking what she did, Eve assumed the slow and measured pace of a religious procession, as she had seen one at Lanherne, still swinging her hat, and letting the flowers fall from it whilst she chanted meaningless words to a sacred strain. Then she caught her straw hat to her, and holding it before her in her left arm, advanced at a quicker pace, still singing. Now she dipped her right hand in the crown and strewed the blossoms to left and right, as did the little girls in the Corpus Christi procession round the convent grounds at Lanherne. Her song quickened and brightened, and changed its character as her flighty thoughts shifted to

other topics and her changeful mood assumed another complexion. Her tune became that of the duet *Là ci darem la mano*, in 'Don Giovanni,' which she had often sung with her sister. She sang louder and more joyously, and her feet moved in rhythm to this song, as they had to the ecclesiastical chant; her eyes sparkled, her cheeks flushed.

It seemed to her that a delicate echo accompanied her—very soft and spiritual, now in snatches, then low, rolling, long-drawn-out. She stopped and listened, then went on again. What she heard was the echo from the rocks and tree boles.

But presently the road became steeper, and she could no longer spare breath for her song; now the sacred chant was quite forgotten, but the sweet air of Mozart clung to her memory, as the scent of pot-pourri to a parlour, and there it would linger the rest of the day.

As she walked on she was in a dream. What must it be to hear these songs accompanied by instruments, and with light and scenery, and acting on the stage? Oh, that she could for once in her life have the supreme felicity of seeing a real play!

Suddenly a flash of vivid golden light broke before her, the trees parted, and she stood on the Raven Rock, a precipice that shoots high above the Tamar and commands a wide prospect over Cornwall—Hingston Hill, where Athelstan fought and beat the Cornish in the last stand the Britons made—and Kitt Hill, a dome of moor-clad mountain. As she stepped forth on the rock to enjoy the light and view and air, there rushed out of the oak and dog-wood bushes a weird boy, who capered and danced, brandished a fiddle, clapped it under his chin, and still dancing, played *Là ci darem* fast, faster, till his little arms went faster than Eve could see.

The girl stood still, petrified with terror. Here was the Pixy of the Raven Rock Jasper had spoken of. The malicious boy saw and revelled in her fear, and gambolled round her, grimacing and still fiddling till his tune led up to and finished in a shriek.

'There, there,' said he, at length, lowering the violin and bow; 'how I have scared you, Eve!'

Eve trembled in every limb, and was too alarmed to speak. The scenery, the rock, the boy, swam in a blue haze before her eyes.

'There, Eve, don't be frightened. You led me on with your singing. I followed in your flowery traces. Don't you know me?'

Eve shook her head. She could not speak.

'You have seen me. You saw me that night when I came riding over your downs at the back of Martin, when poor Jasper fell—you remember me. I smashed your rattle-trap gig. What a piece of good luck it was that Jasper's horse went down and not ours. I might have broken my fiddle. I'd rather break a leg, especially that of another person.'

Eve had not thought of the boy since that eventful night. Indeed, she had seen little of him then.

'I remember,' she said, 'there was a boy.'

'Myself. Watt is my name, or, in full, Walter. If you doubt my humanity touch my hand; feel, it is warm.' He grasped Eve and drew her out on the rocky platform.

'Sit down, Eve. I know you better than you know me. I have heard Martin speak of you. That is how I know about you. Look me in the face.'

Eve raised her eyes to his. The boy had a strange countenance. The hair was short-cropped and black, the skin olive. He had protruding and large ears, and very black keen eyes.

'What do you think is my age?' asked the boy. 'I am nineteen. I am an ape. I shall never grow into a man.' He began again to skip and make grimaces. Eve shrank away in alarm.

'There! Put your fears aside, and be reasonable,' said Watt, coming to a rest. 'Jasper is below, munching his dinner. I have seen him. He would not eat whilst you were by. He did not suspect I was lying on the rock overhead in the heath, peering down on you both whilst you were talking. I can skip about, I can scramble anywhere, I can almost fly. I do not wish Jasper to know I am here. No one must know but yourself, for I have come here on an errand to you.'

'To me!' echoed Eve, hardly recovered from her terror.

'I am come from Martin. You remember Martin? Oh! there are not many men like Martin. He is a king of men. Imagine an old town, with ancient houses and a church tower behind, and the moon shining on it, and in the moonlight Martin in velvet, with a hat in which is a white feather, and his violin, under a window, thinking you are there, and singing *Deh, vieni alla finestra*. Do you know the tune? Listen.' The boy took his fiddle, and touching the strings with his fingers, as though playing a mandolin, he sang that sweet minstrel song.

Eve's blue eyes opened wonderingly, this was all so strange and incomprehensible to her.

'See here, Miss Zerlina, you were singing *Là ci darem* just

now; try it with me. I can take Giovanni's part, and you that of Zerlina.'

'I cannot. I cannot, indeed.'

'You shall. I shall stand between you and the wood. You cannot escape over the rock, you would be dashed to pieces. I will begin.'

Suddenly a loud voice interrupted him as he began to play—
'Watt!'

Standing under the shadow of the oaks, with one foot on the rocky platform, was Jasper.

'Watt, how came you here?'

The boy lowered his violin and stood for a moment speechless.

'Miss Eve,' said Jasper, 'please go home. After all, you have encountered the pixy, and that a malicious and dangerous imp. Stand aside, Watt.'

The boy did not venture to resist. He stood back near the edge of the rock and allowed Eve to pass him.

When she was quite gone, Jasper said gravely to the boy, 'What has brought you here?'

'That is a pretty question to ask me, Jasper. We left you here, broken and senseless, and naturally Martin and I want to know what condition you are in. How could we tell whether you were alive or dead? You know very well that Martin could not come, so I have run here to obtain information.'

'I am well,' answered Jasper; 'you may tell Martin, everywhere but here,' he laid his hand on his heart.

'With such a pretty girl near I do not wonder,' laughed the boy. 'I shall tell poor Martin of the visits paid you at the water's edge.'

'That will do,' said Jasper; 'this joking offends me. Tell Martin I am here, but with my heart aching for him.'

'No occasion for that, Jasper. Not a cricket in the grass is lighter of spirit than he.'

'I dare say,' said the elder, 'he does not feel matters acutely. Tell him the money must be restored. Here I stay as a pledge that the debt shall be paid. Tell him that I insist on his restoring the money.'

'Christmas is coming, and after that Easter, and then, all in good time, Christmas again; but money once passed, returns no more.'

'I expect Martin to restore what he took. He is good at heart, but inconsiderate. I know Martin better than you. You are his

bad angel. He loves me, and is generous. He knows what I have done for him, and when I tell him that I must have the money back he will return it if he can.'

'If he can!' repeated the boy, derisively. 'It is well you have thrown in that proviso. I once tossed my cap into the Dart and ran two miles along the bank after it. I saw it for two miles bobbing on the ripples, but at last it went over the weir above Totnes and disappeared. I believe that cap was fished up at Dartmouth, and is now worn by the mayor's son. It is so with money. Once let it out of your hands and it avails nothing to run after it. It disappears and comes up elsewhere to profit others.'

'Where is Martin now?'

'Anywhere and everywhere.'

'He is not in this county, I trust.'

'Did you never hear of the old lady who lost the store closet key and hunted everywhere except in her own pocket? What is under your nose is overlooked.'

'Go back to Martin. Tell him, as he values his safety and my peace of mind, to keep out of the country, certainly out of the county. Tell him to take to some honest work and stick to it, and to begin his repentance by——'

'There! if I carry a preachment away with me I shall never reach Martin. I had a surfeit of this in the olden days, Jasper. I know a sailor lad who has been fed on salt junk at sea till if you put but as much as will sit on the end of your knife under his nose when he is on land he will upset the table. It is the same with Martin and me. No sermons for us, Jasper. So—see, I am off at the first smell of a text.'

He darted into the wood and disappeared, singing at the top of his voice, 'Life let us cherish.'

CHAPTER XVII.

FORGET-ME-NOT!

THAT night Eve could not sleep. She thought of her wonderful adventure. Who was that strange boy? And who was Martin? And, what was the link between these two and Jasper?

Towards morning, when she ought to have been stirring, she fell asleep, and laughed in her dreams. She woke with the sun

shining in on her, and her father standing by her bed, watching her.

After the visions in which she had been steeped full of fair forms and brilliant colours, it was a shock to her to unclothe her eyes on the haggard face of her father, with sunken eyes.

‘What is it, papa?’

‘My dear, it is ten o’clock. I have waited for my breakfast. The tea is cold, the toast has lost its crispness, and the eggs are like the tea—cold.’

‘Oh, papa!’ she said sorrowfully, sitting up in bed; ‘I have overslept myself. But, you will not begrudge me the lovely dreams I have had. Papa! I saw a pixy yesterday.’

‘Where, child?’

‘On the Raven Rock.’

He shut his eyes, and put his hand over his mouth. Then he heaved a deep sigh, said nothing, turned, and went out of the room.

Eve was the idol of her father’s heart. He spoiled her, by allowing her her own way in everything, by relieving her of every duty, and heaping all responsibilities on the shoulders of his eldest daughter.

Eve was so full of love and gaiety, that it was impossible to be angry with her when she made provoking mistakes; she was so penitent, so pretty in her apologies, and so sincere in her purpose of amendment.

Eve was warmly attached to her father. She had an affectionate nature, but none of her feelings were deep. Her rippling conversation, her buoyant spirits, enlivened the prevailing gloom of Mr. Jordan. His sadness did not depress her. Indeed, she hardly noticed it. Hers was not a sympathetic nature. She exacted the sympathy of others, but gave nothing more in return than prattle and laughter.

She danced down the stairs when dressed, without any regret for having kept her father waiting. He would eat a better breakfast for a little delay, she said to herself, and satisfied her conscience.

She came into the breakfast-room in a white muslin dress, covered with little blue sprigs, and with a blue riband in her golden hair. The lovely roses of her complexion, the sparkling eyes, the dimple in her cheeks, the air of perfect content with herself and with all the world, disarmed what little vexation hung in her father’s mood.

‘Do you think Bab will be home to-day?’ she asked, seating

herself at the tea-tray without a word of apology for the lateness of her appearance.

'I do not know what her movements are.'

'I hope she will. I want her home.'

'Yes, she must return, to relieve you of your duties.'

'I am sure the animals want her home. The pigeons find I am not regular in throwing them barley, and I sometimes forget the bread-crumbs after a meal. The little black heifer always runs along the paddock when Bab goes by, and she is indifferent to me. She lows when I appear, as much as to say, "Where is Miss Barbara?" Then the cat has not been himself for some days, and the little horse is in the dumps. Do you think brute beasts have souls?'

'I do not know.' Then after a pause, 'What was that you said about a pixy?'

'Oh, papa! it was a dream.' She coloured. Something rose in her heart to check her from confiding to him what in her thoughtless freedom she was prepared to tell on first awaking.

He pressed her no further. He doubtless believed she had spoken the truth. She had ever been candid. Now, however, she lacked courage to speak. She remembered that the boy had said 'I come to you with a message.' He had disappeared without giving it. What was that message? Was he gone without delivering it?

Mr. Jordan slowly ate his breakfast. Every now and then he looked at his daughter, never steadily, for he could look fixedly long at nothing.

'I will tell you all, papa,' said Eve suddenly, shaking her head, to shake off the temptation to be untrue. Her better nature had prevailed. 'It was not a dream, it was a reality. I did see a pixy on the Raven Rock, the maddest, merriest, ugliest imp in the world.'

'We are surrounded by an unseen creation,' said Mr. Jordan. 'The microscope reveals to us teeming life in a drop of water. Another generation will use an instrument that will show them the air full of living things. Then the laugh will be no more heard on earth. Life will be grave, if not horrible. This generation is sadder than the last because less ignorant.'

'Oh, papa! He was not a pixy at all. I have seen him before, when Mr. Jasper was thrown. Then he was perched like an ape, as he is, on the cross you set up where my mother first appeared to you. He was making screams with his fiddle.'

Mr. Jordan looked at her with flickering, frightened eyes. 'It

was a spirit—the horse saw it and started—that was how Jasper was thrown,’ he said gravely.

‘Here Jasper comes,’ said Eve, laughing; ‘ask him.’ But, instead of waiting for her father to do this, she sprang up, and danced to meet him with the simplicity of a child, and clapping her palms she asked, ‘Mr. Jasper! my father will have it that my funny little pixy was a spirit of the woods or wold, and will not believe that he is flesh and blood.’

‘My daughter,’ said Mr. Jordan, ‘has told me a strange story. She says that she saw a boy on the—the Raven Rock, and that you know him.’

‘Yes, I do.’

‘Whence comes he?’

‘That I cannot say.’

‘Where does he live?’

‘Nowhere.’

‘Is he here still?’

‘I do not know?’

‘Have you seen him before?’

‘Yes—often.’

‘That will do.’ Mr. Jordan jerked his head and waved his hand, in sign that he did not wish Jasper to remain.

He treated Jasper with rudeness; he resented the loss of Eve’s money, and, being a man of narrow mind and vindictive temper, he revenged the loss on the man who was partly to blame for the loss. He brooded over his misfortune and was bitter. The sight of Jasper irritated him, and he did not scruple at meals to make allusions to the lost money which must hurt the young man’s feelings. When Barbara was present, she interposed to turn the conversation or blunt the significance of her father’s words. Eve, on the other hand, when Mr. Jordan spoke in a way she did not like to Jasper or Barbara, started up and left the room, because she could not endure discords. She sprang out of the way of harsh words as she turned from a brier. It did not occur to her to save others, she saved herself.

Barbara thought of Jasper and her father, Eve only of herself.

When Jasper was gone, Mr. Jordan put his hand to his head. ‘I do not understand, I cannot think,’ he said, with a vacant look in his eyes. ‘You say one thing, and he another.’

‘Pardon me, dearest papa, we both say the same, that the pixy was nothing but a real boy of flesh and blood, but—there, let us think and talk of something else.’

'Take care!' said Mr. Jordan gloomily; 'take care! There are spirits where the wise see shadows; the eye of the fool sees farther than the eye of the sage. My dear Eve, beware of the Raven Rock.'

Eve began to warble the air of the serenade in 'Don Giovanni' which she had heard the boy Watt sing.

Then she threw her arms round her father's neck. 'Do not look so miserable, papa. I am the happiest little being in the world, and I will kiss your cheeks till they dimple with laughter.' But instead of doing so, she dashed away to pick flowers, for she thought, seeing herself in the glass opposite, that a bunch of forget-me-not in her bosom was what lacked to perfect her appearance in the blue-sprigged muslin.

She knew where wild forget-me-nots grew. The Abbot's Well sent its little silver rill through rich grass towards the wood, where it spilled down the steep descent to the Tamar. She knew that forget-me-nots grew at the border of the wood, just where the stream left the meadow and the glare of the sun for its pleasant shadow. As she approached the spot she saw the imp-like boy leap from behind a tree.

He held up his finger, put it to his lips, then beckoned her to follow him. This she would not do. She halted in the meadow, stooped, and, pretending not to see him, picked some of the blue flowers she desired.

He came stealthily towards her, and pointed to a stone a few steps further, which was hidden from the house by the slope of the hill. 'I will tell you nothing unless you come,' he said.

She hesitated a moment, looked round, and advanced to the place indicated.

'I will go no farther with you,' said she, putting her hand on the rock. 'I am afraid of you.'

'It matters not,' answered the boy; 'I can say what I want here.'

'What is it? Be quick, I must go home.'

'Oh, you little puss! Oh, you came out full of business! I can tell you, you came for nothing but the chance of hearing what I forgot to tell you yesterday. I must give the message I was commissioned to bear before I can leave.'

'Who from?'

'Can you ask? From Martin.'

'But who is Martin?'

'Sometimes he is one thing, then another; he is Don Giovanni. Then he is a king. There—he is an actor. Will that content you?'

'What is his surname?'

'O Eve! daughter of Eve!' jeered the boy, 'all inquisitiveness! What does that matter? An actor takes what name suits him.'

'What is his message? I must run home.'

'He stole something from you—wicked Martin.'

'Yes; a ring.'

'And you—you stole his heart away. Poor Martin has had no peace of mind since he saw you. His conscience has stung him like a viper. So he has sent me back to you with the ring.'

'Where is it?'

'Shut your blue eyes, they dazzle me, and put out your finger.'

'Give me the ring, please, and let me go.'

'Only on conditions—not my conditions—those of Martin. He was very particular in his instructions to me. Shut your eyes and extend your dear little finger. Next swear never, never to part with the ring I put on your finger.'

'That I never will. Mr. Martin had no right to take the ring. It was impertinent of him; it made me very angry. Once I get it back I will never let the ring go again.' She opened her eyes.

'Shut! shut!' cried the boy; 'and now swear.'

'I promise,' said the girl. 'That suffices.'

'There, then, take the ring.' He thrust the circlet on her finger. She opened her eyes again and looked at her hand.

'Why, boy,' she exclaimed, 'this is not my ring! It is another.'

'To be sure it is, you little fool. Do you think that Martin would return the ring you gave him? No, no. He sends you this in exchange for yours. It is prettier. Look at the blue flower on it, formed of turquoise. Forget-me-not.'

'I cannot keep this. I want my own,' said Eve, pouting, and her eyes filling.

'You must abide Martin's time. Meanwhile retain this pledge.'

'I cannot! I will not!' She stamped her foot petulantly on the oxalis and forget-me-not that grew beneath the rock, tears of vexation brimming in her eyes. 'You have not dealt fairly by me. You have cheated me.'

'Listen to me, Miss Eve,' said the boy, in a coaxing tone. 'You are a child, and have to be treated as such. Look at the beautiful stones, observe the sweet blue flower. You know what that means—Forget me not. Our poor Martin has to ramble through the world with a heart-ache, yearning for a pair of sparkling blue eyes,

and for two wild roses blooming in the sweetest cheeks the sun ever kissed, and for a head of hair like a beech tree touched by frost in a blazing autumn sun. Do you think he can forget these? He carries that face of yours ever about with him, and now he sends you this ring, and that means—"Miss, you have made me very unhappy. I can never forget the little maid with eyes of blue, and so I send her this token to bid her forget me not, as I can never forget her."

And as Eve stood musing, with pouting lips and troubled brow, looking at the ring, the boy took his violin, and with the fingers plucked the strings to make an accompaniment as he sang:—

A maiden stood beside a river,
And with her pitcher seemed to play;
Then sudden stooped and drew up water,
But drew my heart as well away.

And now I sigh beside the river,
I dream about that maid I saw,
I wait, I watch, am restless, weeping,
Until she come again to draw.

A flower is blooming by the river,
A floweret with a petal blue,
Forget me not, my love, my treasure!
My flower and heart are both for you.

He played and sang a sweet, simple, and plaintive air. It touched Eve's heart, always susceptible to music. Her lips repeated after the boy, 'My flower and heart are both for you.'

She could not make up her mind what to do. While she hesitated, the opportunity of returning the ring was gone. Watt had disappeared into the bushes.

(To be continued.)

The Gold Fields of the Transvaal.

THERE exists an old Portuguese map of South Africa where on the present site of Kimberley is marked 'Here be diamonds.' The date of that map is 1670. And yet it required an interval of two hundred years before an accident confirmed the earlier discovery, and brought to light the enormous diamondiferous deposits of Griqualand West.

In like manner, it has been known for the past two centuries that gold was obtained from the East Coast of South Africa in barter from the natives. Sofala and the adjacent countries were supposed to be the Ophir of the Bible; that the amorous Queen of Sheba held dominion here; and that Solomon had drawn his supplies of the precious metal from these African mines, with which he had astonished the Eastern world. But these legends were surrounded with the halo of romance: they had not received the stamp of scientific confirmation: and it was reserved for the travellers Carl Mauch and Thomas Baines to make those discoveries which, if they did not accentuate the truth of these legends, at least proved the existence of vast beds of mineral wealth, of remains of old workings, and, what was far more interesting, of ruins of ancient buildings, pointing to a civilisation of which all records have been lost, although far ahead of the present inhabitants of these comparatively unknown regions. In the years extending from 1860 to 1875 many travellers had made journeys through the Transvaal as far as the Zambesi. Erskine, Mohr, Hübner, Elton, Osborne, Sanderson, Mauch and Baines had all passed over what was then unfamiliar ground. But it was certainly Mauch and Baines who were the most indefatigable. They had sketched out their routes, filled in with correct observation a tract of country which in the old atlases was marked unknown deserts, or decorated with pictures of elephants and lions, and had, moreover, made geological observations on the tracts over which they had passed. And throughout

the whole extent of that vast country wherever they went were indications of gold, silver, iron, copper, and coal. The gold was generally found in exposed quartz reefs, but alluvial only in patchy deposits.

The diamond fields discovered in 1867 brought the Transvaal and the adjacent countries into fuller notice. But the romantic attractions which Kimberley offered to the prospector, and the comparative ease with which the first diamonds were withdrawn from the soil, proved a greater inducement to those seekers after wealth than the speculative and dim uncertainty as to what the Transvaal gold fields might yield. Besides, the difficulties of communication, the wild and rugged country, the hostility of the natives were difficulties insurmountable to the slender resources of the individual prospector.

About 1873 to 1875 payable gold had been found in the Leydenberg district of the Transvaal, and many miners from California and Australia were attracted to these fields. In 1875 Mr. H. H. Solomon, of Port Elizabeth, returned from a lengthened tour in the Transvaal, bringing with him 140 lbs. weight of gold in grains and nuggets which had been purchased in the Pretoria and Leydenberg districts. A great deal of scepticism existed as to the payable nature of these discoveries, and as no capitalists stirred in the matter there was no move made for any further development of these discoveries. Occasionally paragraphs appeared in the colonial papers relative to some lucky diggers who had made their pile and were returning home; but beyond these vague rumours nothing further was known. In 1877 occurred the Secocoeni war, in which the Boers called in the help of the British, which was succeeded by the occupation of the country by our troops. The rebellion and the retrocession of the country after the terrible disaster of Majuba Hill are too fresh in the minds of Englishmen to need recapitulation. Suffice it to say that the Boers are now in possession of a country which is about the size of France, rich in every mineral product, with a climate, although variable in some parts, as healthy as the Cape (owing to its great elevation above the sea level), and which, with the influx of population and the development of railways, bids fair to become one of the most prosperous countries in the world.

The first great rush to the gold fields may be said to have been heralded by Mr. D. Moodie, who in 1884, in compounding for a debt, obtained a concession from the Transvaal Government of thirteen farms, about 80,000 acres in extent, which he knew at

that time to contain gold, and which have since been proved to be highly auriferous.

This tract of country—in fact, the whole of the De Kaap Valley—formerly belonged to the Swazi King. Umbandine granted it to the British when they took over the Transvaal, and it was ceded to the Boers, with the retrocession of the Transvaal.

The farms are situated about 160 miles from Delagoa Bay, and about 450 miles from Durban, and close to the new township of Barberton. A number of alluvial diggers were located on these farms, with whom Mr. Moodie eventually came to terms; and soon afterwards the property was sold by Mr. Moodie to a Natal syndicate, who floated it as a public company. It was entitled 'Moodie's Gold Mining and Exploration Co., Limited.' Its capital is 240,000*l.*, in 1*l.* shares. Only 4*s.* 6*d.* have been called up on these shares,¹ and they have for the past year or so fluctuated between 7*s.* 6*d.* and 27*s.* 6*d.* Further 'calls' will be made for the development of this grand property. At present only four farms have been prospected over, and the following companies are at work: Pioneer, Beehive, Whitehead's, Natalia, Tiger Trap, Union. The average yield up to date is 1 oz. 2 dwts. to the ton. The last return from Moodie's showed 660 oz. produced during the month of June. The income of this exploration company is to be derived from licences, rents, and a royalty of 8½ per cent. on the gross amount of gold produced. There is a great future for this company, it being an undoubtedly good investment.

It was about this time, 1884–85, that the valley of the Kaap River became a favourite haunt of prospectors. Certain men who had been pricking the ground for months past were positive of the existence of large reefs in this vicinity. Alluvial gold had been found in the creeks, but certainly not in payable quantities; and now the great idea of the prospectors was to pay more attention to reefs. About fifteen miles N.E. of the present town of Barberton the Victoria Co.'s reef was struck among others; but it was the discovery in June 1885 of that wonderful outcrop of quartz first known as the 'Sheba,' and afterwards as Bray's Golden Quarry, which turned the heads of South African colonists, and produced a wave of speculation which has not only caused the ruin of thousands, but unfortunately has discredited these fields for the time being in the eyes of the British investing public.

Mr. Edwin Bray's sudden accession of fortune arrived at an

¹ June 1887.

opportune moment. Fate seemed to have been against him, and a run of bad luck had brought him to the verge of bankruptcy. A native of Wales, he seems to have been engaged in mining and engineering operations for many years previous to his settling in South Africa. Here he was for some time engaged in lead mining, which was unsuccessful. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Bray in Barberton, and of visiting the properties on the Sheba Range in his company. He is a well-knit, fine-looking old man of about sixty.¹ His white hair and beard help to show up a fresh complexion, and his blue eyes shine with a kindly expression not untinted with sadness. His great hobby is gardening, and on the slope of the Sheba he has built himself a roomy, comfortable house, and spared no expense in laying out a flower, fruit, and vegetable garden, most of the plants and seeds having been brought all the way from Natal. He hopes eventually to supply Barberton with vegetables. After discussing a refreshing cup of tea we stroll down the slope of the Sheba Hill until we come to the 'Quarry.' Here to the bottom of the gully is 300 feet. Where we stand is an excavation about forty feet wide, extending about thirty feet into the side of the hill. Twenty-five or thirty Delagoa Bay Kaffirs are quarrying the stone and sending it down in acoriab buckets. At the foot of the quarry are ox wagons, which transport the quartz to the mill, seven miles down Fig Tree Creek. On this same range are the 'Edwin Bray,' 'Oriental,' and 'Nil Desperandum' Companies. Although on the Sheba range, they must not be confounded with the Sheba. This is a blow of highly auriferous quartz which has at present not been traced to any neighbouring lode. It slopes at an angle of 30°, and, although it has only been proved at the 300-foot level, there is no reason why it should not continue its course below the bed of the gully.

It is well known that the greatest discoveries are the results of accidents. The finding of the Golden Quarry was one of them. But let me tell the story in Mr. Bray's own words: 'After leaving the Marico district I came over to Moodie's, and eventually here. I and Griffiths, my chum, were working on the top of this hill. We were sinking a shaft, and, after a deal of hard work, we found we had come to the end of our dynamite, and no money to buy more. I descended the gully, mounted the opposite hill, sat down, and looked across at the scene of our labours. I noticed that there was a large outcrop of quartz appearing among

¹ Mr. Bray died in Pretoria on July 14, 1887, from liver disease: the privations of the prospector had evidently been too much for him.

the bushes on the slope of the hill, some way below where I had been prospecting. I walked back, and found what I thought might be the hanging walls was the solid quartz itself. It was of a greyish blue colour, veined with white lines, but showing no visible signs of gold. My surprise may be imagined when, on panning out a small quantity of the rock, a residue of fine gold was the result. The gold was distributed through the quartz like the finest flour, some being in chemical combination with the pyrites.¹ He tested a larger quantity, with the same results, and on a proper analysis being made it was found to run 6 oz. to the ton. He and his brother prospectors in the meantime had pegged off fifteen claims, which they floated amongst themselves. The capital was 15,000*l.* in 1*l.* shares. Several parcels of quartz were now sent to Messrs. Johnson, Matthey, and Co., the well-known assayers, of Hatton Garden, to be tested. These yielded 13 oz., 20 oz., and even 47 oz. to the ton.¹

And now by way of parenthesis I will say a few words as to the manner in which quartz reefs have been hitherto tested on these fields, and the misleading way (to use no stronger term) by which the investor has been induced to part with his coined gold, for the idea of getting it back a hundredfold in retorted cakes.

There is an old miner's saying that 'Gold is where you find it, but silver runs in veins.' It is almost literally true. No geologist, no theorist, no practical man can lay down any law by which the presence of gold is to be accounted for. It has been found in various kinds of rock formation, in most of the stratified rocks, and both pure and in conjunction with every known metal; running in some quartz extraordinarily rich, side by side with worthless rock. No two tons of quartz will run alike. No *infallible* testing of a quartz reef can really be made. The fairest method is to extract certain specified quantities of quartz just as it comes from various parts of the lode—from its surface, its outcroppings, its drives, which may be presumed to be made at lower levels to test the permanence of the lode. These various crushings (certainly not less than 25 tons) should be carefully averaged, and the result will be a fair average test of the capabilities of the mines. On that fair test, a return of at least 25 per cent. per annum should

¹ The 'Sheba,' from its discovery in June 1885 to June 3, 1887, has crushed 1,807 tons, yielding 9,690 oz., showing an average of 5 oz. 7 dwts. to the ton; a large proportion of gold is supposed to be lost in the pyrites. The tailings, however, are being saved.

be allowed for by the investor, for be it always remembered that as a dividend is paid the capital is being dispersed, and the contingency should always be looked for that at one time or another the quartz lode may pinch out altogether, or cease to become gold-bearing. Of course, on the other hand, the very reverse may be arrived at, and what at first may have been condemned as a worthless property may turn out to be exceedingly rich.

I have made the above remarks more in reference to the *quartz testing* of the Transvaal gold companies than anything else. For nearly all the companies started, pieces of *picked quartz* were either assayed locally or sent to England. Naturally enough, the results, as printed in the prospectuses, were of the most glowing descriptions. It only required a prospector or claim-holder to come forward with some claims, when he was pounced upon by the company-monger, who paid him out with a certain amount of cash and deferred shares; and the claims, whether they contained gold or not, were launched upon the market under a fantastic name, and the public, with visions of gigantic wealth before them, subscribed to every share they could lay their eager hands upon.

Directly the news of these marvellously rich assays reached the Cape, the whole colony went mad. Metaphorically speaking, in every stone they saw gold. Untaught by the experience of the disastrous diamond-mining speculation of 1880-81, they rushed in a body to subscribe for gold-mining shares. People who knew as much about gold mining as an Esquimaux began to speak in familiar terms and with knowing glances of quartz reefs, leaders, pannings, plates, batteries, flumes, and pelton wheels, as if they were to the manner born. The quiet, slow, legitimate business of the colony was neglected. Gold fever was coursing madly through everybody's veins. Shares began to rise. Shebas, which one or two of the original vendors had parted with for 1*l.*, were in demand at 10*l.*, then at 20*l.* They rose by leaps and bounds to 50*l.* The excitement increased. Companies whose properties were near the Sheba were supposed (although perfectly untested at this time) to possess the same body and kind of quartz; and their shares rose in sympathy. Kimberley Imperials 1*l.* shares rose to 10*l.*, and large transactions afterwards took place in them at 18*l.* Oriental 1*l.* shares touched 23*l.*, and at this price they were largely dealt in in London. Many minor companies' shares rose 500 to 1,000 per cent. Men who sold shares in the morning at enormous profits were only too glad to buy them back again in the afternoon at great advances, because they were certain of an

extensive profit on the following day. No one stopped to inquire whether there was any justification for this inflation—all they knew was this, it was only necessary to buy or subscribe to shares in any company to reap enormous profits.

The excitement which began in May 1886 increased with crescendo force to the end of the year. Everything went on rising. Shebas again were positively bought at 60*l.*, 80*l.*, 90*l.*, and at last 100*l.* There were large transactions at 80*l.* And when they touched 100*l.* the holders began to get firm. Mr. Edwin Bray refused to sell shares under 100*l.* The mine was certainly crushing out 6 oz. to the ton, and the quarry looked as if it had only been scratched, but few inquired what it cost to produce that gold. But few thought of making a simple calculation that, reckoning the enormous cost of transport on provisions, tools, dynamite, &c., it cost 15*s.* to mine, 15*s.* to transport, and 20*s.* to crush each ton of ore in this district. Few reckoned that the Sheba Company, with its 15,000*l.* capital, was standing at 1,500,000*l.* at its then existing price of 100*l.* per share! The Sheba had certainly shown its capacities, there were encouraging possibilities, but what had the Kimberley Imperial done, or Krehl's Oriental? The Kimberley Imperial, with its capital of 70,000*l.*, nearly five times that of the Sheba, stood at 1,350,000*l.* What a return must have been expected to produce a 25 per cent. dividend here! And the Oriental, with its capital of 60,000*l.*, although test crushings in the latter case had shown 4 oz. to the ton! But it made no difference to the wild speculators, who thought they were rushing on to fortune's starry goal. Most of them were quietly ensconced in their colonial homes. They were living on rumours, brokers' reports, and telegrams. They heard that Barberton had risen with almost mushroom growth from a camp of a few huts to a city of 6,000 inhabitants. Kimberley capital was being invested. That alone was a healthy sign, they thought. The towns of the various colonies were being emptied of all their able-bodied inhabitants, whose goal was Barberton.

In the meantime several of the promoters of the various companies had been quietly clearing out of all their shares, and very soon the public were rudely awakened from their dreams of wealth.

A powerful syndicate, composed of some of London's wealthiest firms, had sent out Mr. Gardner Williams, a mining engineer and expert of some reputation, to report on the De Kaap Gold Fields, and ascertain to the best of his ability whether the lodes were permanent or not. He was retained by certain directors of the

Kimberley Imperial to give his professional opinion upon that particular property. This was in the month of March 1887. There was an uneasy feeling in the air, and the stock markets became languid. But when the report was issued there was no uncertainty as to the value of stocks. The report was most damning. It was uncompromising. It declared the reefs running through the claims of the Kimberley Imperial to be 'small and of poor quality. There were certainly rich small leaders which might repay the individual digger, but which would never pay for a company to work.' Further, it gave an exhaustive description of the mine. The report acted like a bombshell in a conservatory. The glistening fabric which had been evolved from the imagination of speculators was shattered to pieces. All rushed to sell. Shares tumbled in an appalling manner. Good and bad stocks alike—all suffered. The idea was to 'clear out.' Shebas dropped to 20*l*; Orientals to 4*l*.; Kimberley Imperials to 10*s*. Shares in smaller companies could not be sold at any price. Holders would have gladly accepted shillings where, a few days previously, they had refused sovereigns. Panic had taken possession of the public, and complete demoralisation was the result.

Indignation meetings were held in several colonial towns, with the object of bringing the promoters of the Kimberley Imperial within the meshes of the law. The accounts submitted by the directors showed an amount of recklessness which was magnificent for its impudence. But they were safe, and, after all said and done, the public were themselves to blame. They were fools enough to rush in and pay over 1,000 per cent. premium for shares on which they expected to make money, and if everything had turned out right there would have been a general handshaking all round. The attitude of the colonial press during the 'boom' was worthy of all praise. From the very first they decried the rabid speculation, and prophesied the result. The banks also steadily refused to lend money on scrip, or discount (as far as their knowledge went) any bills except those of a purely commercial character. The public had succumbed to the mania for speculation which sweeps periodically over communities, and, as is usual in such cases, with the loss came the desire for retaliation; the blind impulse only having the effect of damaging the reputation of the district as a gold-producing area.

The formation of the Barberton reefs is a quartzose intersected by dykes of diorite. The quartz veins or lodes run mostly in one direction, from S.W. to N.E., and are in the diorite, granite, and

slate formation; and, looking at the width of the strata surrounding these veins, it may be assumed that the reefs are of great depth. This naturally is speculative, and that brings me to the one great fault to which most of the Barberton companies may plead guilty. They all seemed frightened or nervous to know the truth with regard to the permanence of their lodes. The deepest shaft is on the Pioneer Co. on Moodie's—300 feet. There the lode, although only 18 inches wide, is found to be still permanent and of rich quality. There are several other mines which are genuine good properties, and which will eventually pay good dividends. The cry, now that the speculation is over, is, 'Where is your output of gold?' The public wish naturally to see some results before investing. But the public must also look to figures. At the present time¹ there are only about 200 stamps at work in Barberton. Reckoning $1\frac{1}{2}$ ton to each stamp per day of twenty-four hours, twenty working days a month, and taking 1 oz. to the ton as a fair, perhaps underestimated, return, we shall arrive at a monthly produce of 6,000 oz. Of course this is nothing when compared to the enormous superscribed value of the scrip, but it must not be forgotten that up to the present nearly all the money and deferred shares went to promoters, and little or nothing was left for working capital. I believe 200,000*l.* would more than cover the actual cash invested in the Barberton district, whilst the capital of the various companies at par value total about 3,000,000*l.*

Moreover, the mines have suffered from the experiments of amateur engineers, promoters, and directors' friends. Men who had stood behind counters all their lives, or who had been clerks in offices and stores, were suddenly pitchforked into the position of managers and amalgamators, and, although presumably gifted with intelligence, it is not in the nature of things to suppose that they could readily become accomplished miners and engineers.

And so Barberton at the present time is suffering from dreary stagnation. So great is the distrust that just now a veritable Sheba would be looked upon with suspicion!

Barberton! Two years ago a few prospectors had pitched tents here, and now it has all the settled appearance of a town. It contains about 1,500 houses of all descriptions, mostly of zinc, although many are of brick, mud, and grass, and a population estimated at 4,000. It derives its name from Messrs. Hilton and Grey Barber, two well-known colonial gentlemen who were amongst the pioneers. Barberton is situated on sloping elevated ground

¹ June 1887.

in the S.E. corner of the De Kaap Valley. It is right under the hills, and commands an extended view of the whole valley, walled in by mountains from 500 to 3,000 feet elevation. A more eligible site for the town would have been about two miles farther west, on Moodie's property. In fact, this was first pitched upon, but owing to bad management and the absurd terms asked this company lost what would have brought them in an enormous income.

It requires some stretch of the imagination, as we saunter into Mr. Jacob's Horse Shoe Restaurant, to think that not over three years ago this valley was the haunt of lions and elephants. It does seem extraordinary that on a spot where Dutchmen could not be got to settle we should be served with Guinness's stout by a smiling Hebe, at a well-appointed bar, brilliant with plate-glass and mahogany fittings, and good enough to do credit to any West End London street. Barberton can boast of several hotels, three banks, two share exchanges, a couple of music-halls, the foundation of a theatre, and last, but certainly not least, a capital club. Without the club it would be a sorry life for many of the single men. Here are the latest English and colonial newspapers and periodicals, and a billiard-room. Members can be bedded and boarded at moderate charges. Barberton is not a cheap place to live comfortably in, although things are rapidly improving in that respect, and many men are getting their families up from Natal and the Colony. Rents are comparatively high, and the purchase of freehold property is reckoned at two to three years' rental. A bottle of brandy or champagne is 1*l.*, a bottle of beer 4*s.* 6*d.*, and a bottle of soda-water 1*s.* Flour is 3*l.* 10*s.* the bag, bacon 1*s.* a lb., eggs 6*s.* to 8*s.* the dozen. All this is owing to the heavy duties imposed by Government, and the expense of transport. But a man, if he likes to rough it (and many have to, whether they like it or not), can live at from 8*l.* to 10*l.* a month. He must live under canvas or build himself a hut, and he must buy and cook his own food. Prospectors have to do this; and, however romantic it may sound to the man comfortably installed in his well-furnished home, after a very short time they find it terribly monotonous. Many a poor fellow who has relinquished a certain income, allured by the golden visions of these fields, has suffered privations which have sometimes ended in cold and unnatural death. Those who have lived low down in the valley, digging for alluvial, existing on scanty fare, badly cooked, drinking impure water, get into a low state of being. This, combined with the sickening sensation of working on day after day under a tropical sun, and finding nothing,

makes them an easy prey to dysentery and malarial fever. Labouring under these tremendous risks, the prospector deserves to be smiled on by Fortune, but, as a rule, few have reaped the results of their labours. Barberton district has claimed its victims, but the town itself is healthy, and the Sanitary Committee are vigilant in keeping it clean. Up to the time of writing the Dutch Government has refused to grant Barberton a municipality, although they draw an income from it of about 10,000*l.* a month in claim and quit rents. They also refused to recognise the right of their sending a representative to the Volksraad. Last session a bill was passed making fifteen years of residence in the Transvaal necessary to allow aliens to sit in the 'House.' It is to be hoped that time will overcome these unreasoning prejudices.

At present the easiest and safest way to reach Barberton is by way of Natal. The traveller can take the railway from Durban to Ladysmith, distance 189 miles. Here is connected an excellent coach service, which accomplishes the journey of 285 miles in about three and a half days. The accommodation along this route, with one or two exceptions, is good, and in fine dry weather the trip is most delightful. One passes over historical ground. The Amajuba Hill stands like a frowning sentinel over General Colley's grave, and the sight of Laing's Nek brings many a painful recollection. But who is there with a love of nature who will not be delighted with that glorious stretch of country from Durban to Ladysmith? Here are undulating valleys, where sugar, tea, coffee, arrowroot, pines, bananas, mealies, &c. grow in luxurious abundance. The traveller will see the queen of the South African colonies. At Newcastle he will pass by 500 square miles of coal-bearing lands. He will be invigorated by the intoxicating atmosphere of the High Veldt; and, if chilled by the rarified ether of the Drakensberg, he will do ample justice to the fare set before him. The whole route affords a varied panorama, and, if at times the great high plain of the Transvaal stretching from the Natal frontier becomes monotonous, he will find a pleasing change directly he arrives at the Konnetic River, 50 miles from Barberton. Here the active character of the country changes. It is very mountainous, giving every appearance of volcanic origin. Twenty-six miles from Barberton one can look down over the whole of the De Kaap Valley—a glorious sight at any time. I saw it at sunrise: 4,500 square miles of mountain, hill, and valley, suffused with the rosy flush of dawn—a vast jumble of hills—looking as if it had been the playground of the Titans.

From here there is an ugly piece of road known as the 'Shoot'—a gradual descent of about eight miles into the De Kaap Valley. In some places it seems wonderful how a loaded wagon can ever get through in safety. In wet weather it seems hopeless. As it is, many come to grief; and the whole route is lined with the Cape milestone—bleached bones of the trek-ox, horse, and mule. At the foot of the Shoot it is only eighteen miles across the Valley to Barberton.

From Barberton I went on by coach to the Witwatersrandt Gold Fields. These may be described as the latest rush, and are situated, roughly speaking, about 300 miles west of Barberton, and 35 miles south of Pretoria. The discovery of gold in this district is truly of a wonderful nature. One might just as well expect to find gold on the Scotch moors as find it here. This is undoubtedly a country of surprises, and not amongst the least of these surprises is the eccentric distribution of its mineral wealth. On an elevated undulating plateau, 6,000 feet above the sea, are situated those parallel lodes of gold-bearing cement called 'banket.'¹ These so-called reefs have up to now been traced east and west for a distance exceeding 40 miles. A similar formation has been found over 70 miles to the south, in the neighbourhood of Potchefström and Klerksdorp, extending across the Vaal River for miles into the Free State. The credit of being the first discoverer is claimed by a Mr. Struben, who owns some land in the neighbourhood of Pretoria, where, I am given to understand, he has for some time been working some gold-producing quartz. During the mania of 1886 prospecting was going on all over the country, and Mr. Struben was the first man who drove a pick into the 'Randt.' It was a marvellous stroke of luck. The 'indications' were slight pebble ridges rising a few inches above the surface of the surrounding soil. Trenches were cut from north to south across the reef formations to depths varying from 3 to 10 feet, exposing lines of banket of different widths, which have since received various designations. The favourite one at present is called the 'Main Reef,' a body of cement varying from 12 to 15 feet wide, with three or four attendant leaders of 1 to 4 feet in width. This is considered the richest as yet discovered; the 'Jubilee,' 'Wemmer,' 'Wemmer Extension,' 'City and Suburban,' 'Ferrieras,' and other well-known companies are all situated on this lode.

This discovery was made in April 1886. At that time the

¹ Banket is the Dutch word for a sweetstuff like hardbake, which it much resembles.

whole of this Witwatersrandt could certainly have been bought for a couple of thousand pounds. Three months later twenty thousand pounds would have bought the freeholds of all the farms. To-day the capitalised value of companies which have been floated on the proclaimed lands exceeds one million sterling, and the Dutch Government is drawing from this district in claim and stand licences, &c., about 10,000*l.* a month.

And now comes the important question, 'Are the reefs payable, and are they likely to be permanent?' The 'Main' reef has been proved to go 15 dwts. to 1 oz. to the ton, but the 'leaders' are of extraordinary richness. The 'Jubilee' crushed 327 oz. from 100 tons, and the 'Wemmer' 1,300 oz. from a little over 100 tons.¹ These I should call sensational and unreliable crushings, made in the interest of shareholders to 'bull' the shares. In both these cases only the rich narrow leader was allowed to pass through the mill, care being taken that every piece of casing should be previously detached. The deepest shaft on these fields is only 100 feet, so the permanency of the lodes has not yet been fully established. Experts, and their name is legion, assert that an average of 1 oz. to the ton will pay well on these fields, it being estimated that 4 dwts. will cover all expenses. Good practical mining managers are wanted. At present many of the properties are suffering from amateur mismanagement. Open workings are declared to be a mistake, and it is said that stoping will have to be resorted to. These mines will suffer from water, and pumps will be required. The country for miles around being entirely bare, timber will have to be brought from Waterberg and other districts for propping and timbering shafts. Coal has already been opened up seven hours' distance on the Klip River, and in time will be delivered for about 30*s.* per ton. There is not the water power here that Barberton can boast of (where nearly all the machinery is driven by it), but sufficient will be found for the requirements of the plates. It will be some months yet before any practical results of these fields will be apparent. There are several companies established on a sound basis which will be showing results before the end of the year. The great advantages the Witwatersrandt mines have over those of Barberton are these: The mines have had the experience of Barberton to go by, and any purchaser of Randt properties can see the mine in front of him; it will be his fault if he buys an absolutely worthless property. Moreover, there are no

¹ The first dividend of the 'Wemmer' was declared in July, and was 40 per cent. The 1*l.* share now stands at 8*l.*

great difficulties to contend with, and even presuming the lodes are of no great depth—a fact as yet unknown—there is such an enormous surface body of stuff that it will take years to exhaust it.

The capital at present developing these fields is mainly that of Kimberley, no mean factor; but before foreign capital flows in to any extent it will be necessary to show some solid results. When it is remembered that every piece of machinery, every commodity, every necessary of life, has to be brought from England, firstly by steamer 6,500 miles to Port Elizabeth, secondly to Kimberley by 500 miles of railway, and thirdly by ox wagon over 300 miles of road, one must be patient. When the difficulties and expense of transport are duly considered, it is wonderful what progress has already been made. And then again, if a piece of machinery breaks or goes wrong, it often necessitates sending on to Natal or Cape Colony to get it recast, or even sending to England. Therefore, I repeat, investors and speculators in South African ventures must be patient. By the end of this year 700 stamps will be working on the Randt, and probably turning out about 1,000 oz. a day. In another year's time it is estimated 5,000 stamps will be crushing banket.

And this wonderful deposit, how did it ever come there? It is thought by scientific men that the Randt is an ancient sea beach. It is well known that gold is the most widely distributed of all the metals—even sea water containing it to the extent of about 1 grain per ton. The gold has been deposited on this prehistoric beach in fine grains, there being several layers separated by sandstone. Then after a long period, during which time the strata have had time to consolidate, a mighty upheaval took place, tilting up the whole beach, so that what was lying in a horizontal manner is now found going down perpendicular to unknown depths. The banket is composed of water-worn stones, pebbles, and pieces of quartz, all welded together with a cement of silicious sand. It will break in the hand, and crumbles to gravel on exposure to air and moisture, and it is in the cement that the gold is found. The pebbles and quartz contain very little. In many places the banket has every appearance of having been burnt by the volcanic energy. The sandstone casing is also rich in gold. The dip of the banket is about 15° to 30° to the south. The most northerly reefs are at present esteemed as being the richest. There are positive quartz reefs found along the same line as the banket formation, looking very much as if there had been a second eruption at a later time.

A bleak exposed spot has been selected for the site of Johannesburg.

berg, the headquarters for these fields. Barely eight months old, it at present consists of 1,500 houses, and 4,000 to 5,000 inhabitants. The activity here is feverish. The clang of the hammer and the whiz of the saw are heard day and night. Houses, such as they are, are being put up with incredible rapidity. Built mostly of galvanised iron, unburnt brick, and mud, they present a very crude appearance. There being plenty of room, the town has been well laid out, streets are wide, and all running at right angles. There is a large market square, which is well supplied with produce of all descriptions, and living is much cheaper than at Barberton. Already there is a theatre, where a first-rate company is playing to crowded houses. Height's Hotel gives you a splendid bill of fare, and before long the Johannesburg Club will be opened. The main artery, Commissioner Street, presents a lively appearance. Here the coaches arrive and depart for such distant points as Kimberley, Barberton, and Durban, and it seems that all the scum and riffraff of the colonies have congregated here. Outrages are frequent, but time will filter out the scoundrelism, and, with the example of Kimberley before them, the town will become habitable. At present, reckoning its youth, and comparing it with the early days of Kimberley, its progress is far more rapid than that of the centre of the diamond industry. Lying, as it does, 6,000 feet above the sea, the cold in winter is intense, snow and frosts being of common occurrence. The summer is temperate, and altogether it is a healthy locality.

I should be exceeding the limits of an ordinary article if I were to give any further detailed descriptions of these fields. But I must say they do not exhaust the late discoveries in this country. Gold is being worked at Malmani, on the Bechuanaland border. It is known to exist in the Waterberg; rich quartz specimens have been brought down from Marabastadt, and the whole of Zoalpansb erg division is intersected with quartz reefs. Then, again, travellers speak with enthusiasm of the wealth of the northern gold fields (so ably described by the late Mr. Thomas Baines), of Lo Bengula's and Mashona's country, even as far as the Zambesi. There has been for some time machinery at work at the Tali Gold Fields, on the Shasha River, 700 miles N.W. of Pretoria. Swaziland is rich in mineral wealth, and the king, Umbandine, has signed away, on certain conditions, every acre of his country for mineral and grazing rights. Some of the *cessionnaires* may strike oil, but it is idle to suppose, as many do, that the ownership of a Swaziland concession means a certain fortune. At present only

two have turned out well. On Pigg's Peak (40,000 acres, capital 200,000*l.*) a large body of low-grade ore, estimated to run 8 to 10 dwts. to the ton, has been struck, and 50 stamps are being erected to work it. Forbes's Concession, floated as a private company, is now turning out about 1,000 oz. of gold a month.

If we travel farther south into Zululand and Natal, we shall find the prospector busy in both these countries. The Drakensberg Range, of which De Kaap is only a continuation, forms the backbone of these colonies, and it would never be surprising to hear of rich lodes being found in them. Up to the present the Natal finds can scarcely be termed payable.

With such a vast field for exploration, what man can fail to be dazzled by the possibilities and potentialities of wealth? But let me give a warning note to those individuals who, with slender resources of their own, would try their luck on these fields. *No really payable alluvial has yet been found.* The great basin of the De Kaap Valley, where alluvial would naturally be supposed to be, has not yet had a fair trial. There are prospectors at work there, but scarcely paying expenses. What the late Mr. Baines wrote in 1874¹ holds good to-day, and I could do nothing better than quote his own words: 'It is sheer folly for men to leave the writer's desk or the mechanic's bench, where some can earn 12*s.* to 13*s.* per diem, and rush to this or that gold field on hearing of a splendid find, totally ignoring the lengthened search, the sore privation, the exhausting toil, and the heartbreaking disappointments the finders have endured before success rewarded them—and trusting in some vague manner to realise the same "good luck" without the skill, or, perhaps, even the intention to labour with the same energy and perseverance that commanded the success.'

This is good sound advice. There is no country in the world where travelling and living are so expensive as in South Africa. The man with small capital will find his savings dissipated like dew before the noonday sun before he can even get to work, and until payable alluvial is found that man had better keep away.

With regard to Barberton, the depression I believe to be only temporary. Directly the sixty miles of Delagoa Bay Railway is opened—and Sir Thomas Tancred has promised it shall be so in November—from Lorenzo-Marquez to the Transvaal border, there will be a revival. The attention of the world will be brought to this railway. It will bring the gold fields of De Kaap within two

¹ *Gold Regions of South Africa*, page 162.

days' journey of the seaboard, leaving only eighty miles of coaching to bring the traveller to Barberton. This route will monopolise the goods traffic and, when the sanitary arrangements of Lorenzo-Marquez are improved, the passenger traffic. There is nothing like easy and cheap communication to bring about a fusion of races and an amelioration of difficulties. Even now a bloodless revolution is going on throughout the Transvaal. The inroad of English and English-speaking colonists is anglicising everything. The telegraph is open to Barberton, and when the Dutch *concessionnaires* continue the Delagoa Bay Railway to Pretoria the rapid means of communication and social intercourse will all tell their tale. Even now, I may safely affirm, there is more English than Dutch spoken in the Republic. The Queen's Jubilee was celebrated from the Vaal River to the Limpopo. There are now many English farmers, and the chief businesses of the country are conducted by Englishmen. The older Dutch members of the community are viewing all these changes with alarm; they would fain be left in peace; they fear their country is going to be wrested from them. They do not realise that the 'Verdomte Engleschmann' is replenishing their exchequer to the tune of 30,000*l.* a month, developing the resources of their country, and finding a ready market for their produce. But the younger generation are being educated, and are better informed, and, whilst such good and able men as Chief Justice Cotzee and Mr. Justice Brand are at the head of the legal tribunals of the Transvaal, the English settler has little to fear.

To men who wish to know something about the dependencies of the British Crown a journey to South Africa will do good. The conditions of life are so different to those of the old country. There is room to breathe, and a climate to live in. He may look with longing eyes on Delagoa Bay, the only seaport in Africa south of the equator, and the key to the rich Transvaal, and think over the errors of England's South African policy. He can see how happy the native races are when not interfered with, and keep his sympathy for the savages of the city slums. He can correct the mistaken and stereotyped ideas which most Englishmen seem to form of South Africa. He can see with his own eyes the promise of the future. That the gold fields of the Transvaal are a fact is undeniable; and my own belief is that, before another year has passed away, there will be a 'boom' in South Africa such as the world has never seen before.

GEORGE J. NATHAN.

The Pixies' Garden.

SLEEPLESS I lay, though softly rocked
 Upon the bosom of the night;
 The stedfast stars looked down and mocked
 My waking dreams of dead delight,
 They everlastingly as bright
 As when her hand in mine was locked.

The moon swept out through deeps of sky,
 Dim trailing clouds she left behind;
 'Come out,' she said, 'all clouds pass by;
 Thou for thy soul shalt solace find.
 These fevers of a tortured mind
 My light will soothe—or sanctify.'

I rose and passed where hawthorns grow
 Beside the path where, glad and gay,
 I and my sweetheart used to go
 By meadows wreathed with new-mown hay;
 Through fields by moonlit dew made grey,
 I and my heart went, sad and slow.

I reached the garden where the hops
 Make fairy garlands everywhere,
 From each tall pole a dream-wreath drops,
 And strong keen scent fills all the air.
 I saw the Pixies dancing there
 Their magic dance that never stops.

Around the poles in circling rings
 From dawn of moon till dawn of day,
 With dewy cobwebs for their wings,
 They glide and gleam and swing and sway,
 And mortal lips may never say
 The song that every Pixy sings.

And rainbows day has never seen
With unnamed colours make them fair.
Their feet are shod with Spring's first green,
Green gems of glow-worms deck their hair
That floats upon the moonlit air,
Like golden webs on silver sheen.

Their dance goes on through all the years,
But those who see it, few they be.
Only by eyes which many tears
And vigils have made clear to see
Are they beholden: and wishes three
Are his to whom that dance appears.

My first wish? Ah! what room for doubt?
The wish that eats me night and day:
'Would she were here!' No thought about
The other wishes came my way;
For round my neck her dear arms lay,
And all the world was well shut out.

How glad each was of each, and how
Life blossomed then, one heart records.
I shall remember that, I know,
When life is withered up past words,
And, shrunken, slips through earth's loose cords:
I shall remember then as now.

Lost dream, too perfect not to break!
Yet here I might have held her now,
And so for ever—but she spake
(O my soul's voice, divinely low!)
'Ah, might we but our future know!'
And I wished with her, for Love's sake.

And lo! a sea of blackness broke
About us, and we knew our Fate.
Close, close we clung, and neither spoke,
So widely, wildly desolate
The destiny we could not wait
For time to seal or to revoke.

THE PIXIES' GARDEN.

Yet to my heart hers beat, although
It beat in fear and not in bliss.
O fool, to court a deeper woe—
Together we had conquered this :
No woe could live beneath the kiss
That joined our souls an hour ago.

‘Would that we two were dead !’ I cried,
‘And in the quiet churchyard laid,
We should sleep sweetly side by side,
Of past and future unafraid,
By never a hope or fear dismayed,
Together, still, and satisfied.’

And, as I wished it, she was gone !
For that one gift no pixies give.
I only woke, and woke alone,
As I henceforth must wake and live,
Must serve and suffer, strain and strive,
And in my eyes the sunlight shone.

E. NESBIT.

Grey Fur.

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A POOR GOVERNESS.

I.

THE frost came early in the year 186—, and like most early frosts it did a great deal of damage, over and above murdering at one fell swoop the late-lingering flowers, which with kindlier treatment might have bloomed on yet some little time. It is always the first unexpected frost which does the most harm, surprising us as it often does in muslin and straw hats, before we have had time to adjust our winter armour.

This particular frost made the usual amount of havoc in the animal as well as the vegetable world, and amongst other calamities to be laid at its door were the broken leg of an old man, and the death of a little girl.

Probably many other brittle old bones snapped just about that same time, and no doubt scores of little girls, and boys too, succumbed to the effects of chills caught at that period; such cases only go to make up the usual average of deaths and accidents, and are in nowise interesting to the general public. The two cases I have mentioned are only in so far interesting as having brought about the meeting of two young people living far apart; for if neither of these events had happened, or if they had not occurred simultaneously, the chances are that Hugo Weyprecht would never have met Clara Elsinger, and consequently this story would not have been written.

The old man who broke his leg was the confidential agent of the large commercial house of Bilsenkraut, Wolff & Co., at St. Petersburg, and he broke it when hurrying over a crowded crossing. Slipping his foot on one of the puddles frozen overnight, he was run over by a passing omnibus, and brought home disabled for work for a good six weeks to come.

‘Deucedly provoking,’ growled the head of the establishment, when the accident was reported to him, ‘and he was to have started for K—— to-morrow, so as to reach the place before the great market. Could not the fellow have contrived to break his leg at some other time? And there is not another man in the establishment who can manage this affair with ability and discretion. Honesty and ability are both required here, and it is rare indeed to find these two qualities combined. The honest ones are not clever as a rule, and the clever ones are rarely honest. Stay—there is that young German; he is young, to be sure, but I know him to be clever, and I believe, nay, I am almost sure, that he is honest. He has a good face—who knows? The matter is urgent, and we may lose over a million by delay,’ and the great man rang a little bell which stood on his writing-desk, with the air of one who has taken an important resolution.

‘Tell Hugo Weyprecht to speak to me at once,’ was the order he gave, which presently was obeyed.

Hugo Weyprecht was a tall young man of about twenty-six, rather darker than Germans usually are, with thoughtful brown eyes, and a rare and somewhat melancholy smile. Like many of his countrymen he suffered slightly from the national complaint of *Heimweh* (home-sickness), and, despite four years’ residence in Russia, still felt himself to be an alien and an exile in this strange land.

The conversation between the two lasted fully an hour, but as the double doors were closed there was no possibility of overhearing their talk. The great man talked a great deal, while the young one answered from time to time shortly and to the point, or put pregnant questions bearing on the subject of his proposed mission.

His manner seemed to have favourably impressed his patron, for he said in conclusion :

‘I am aware that I am acting rashly in confiding such a weighty matter to you, but I have confidence, and I like your face, and should you prove yourself able to accomplish this to the satisfaction of the firm, you may consider your future secured, and I shall be able to offer you a permanent post in one of our German houses. I know it has long been your wish to return to your country. But you will require to have all your wits about you; the country is not over safe. Remember my directions, and above all, absolute silence and discretion!’

Armed with various credentials in the shape of letters and

addresses, and with a thick leather pocket-book buttoned up within his coat, Hugo Weyprecht left the merchant's room, and twenty-four hours later was on his way to K——, a town in Russian Poland.

II.

THE little girl whose death had happened to coincide with the breaking of the agent's leg, was the daughter and only child of Count and Countess Froloff, wealthy magnates living at their château, some several score of miles from the capital, in a south-eastern direction.

Clara Elsinger, a young German girl of scarcely nineteen, had been governess to little Olga ; it was her first situation, and there was no doubt that for a beginner her lines had fallen in very pleasant places indeed. It had been quite an unlooked-for chance which had secured this enviable position for the penniless German girl, and landed her so many hundred miles away from her own home in the depths of savage Russia. Not longer than six months previously, Count Froloff and his wife, on their way home to Russia after wintering in Paris, had been compelled to stop for a week at Stuttgart on account of some passing indisposition of the Countess. While staying there it became necessary to dismiss the Parisian governess who accompanied them, that elegant female having been detected in some glaring breach of honesty or morality, and, casting about for a *remplacante*, the sweet face and captivating manner of Clara Elsinger had so taken the great lady's fancy that she engaged her on the spot, overcoming whatever reluctance the girl might have felt to leaving her native land, by the assurance of a liberal salary.

And in truth this reluctance was of no very powerful nature, no more than the natural shrinking of a young timid creature to break with the present and make the plunge into totally new and unknown surroundings. She had no close home-ties to make the wrench a painful one, knowing well that her absence would be rather a relief than a pang to the querulous old aunt who, out of a mere sense of duty, had taken care of her since she had been an orphan.

She had had no cause as yet to regret her decision. The Froloffs lived in princely fashion, and everything about their establishment was replete not only with splendour but also with comfort, two things which do not always go hand-in-hand—at least not in Russia. Her duties had been light, she being only

required to instruct the child in German and music, while for the other languages and accomplishments various other teachers were employed.

Still half a child herself, Clara participated in every pleasurable pursuit of her little charge; the long drives in the perfectly-appointed pony carriage, the boating parties on the river, the games of ball in the long gallery. Countess Froloff treated her more like another daughter than a hired attendant, and she wondered how people could talk of the life of a governess being a hard one.

In this way the summer had gone by swiftly like one long uninterrupted holiday. Quickly had Clara accustomed herself to her luxurious surroundings, for this habit is sooner learned than unlearned, and the idea that it would ever have to be unlearned again did not even come to her mind.

Such had been the state of things up to two days ago, and then one evening, after a somewhat longer row in the boat, little Olga had complained of sore throat, which had rapidly developed into diphtheria, and, despite the best medical assistance, taken a fatal termination within twenty-four hours.

'Was it possible that only the day before yesterday they had come back together in the boat laughing and jesting, bearing huge sheaves of dripping bulrushes plucked from the river?' thought Clara as she sat alone in her room. Only the day before yesterday! And now she was making the wreath to be laid on the poor child's coffin.

Clara was sitting on a low footstool, and her delicate fingers were busy at work weaving the snowy camellias into a heavy garland. She looked very sweet sitting there in the twilight, with the large pure flowers heaped on her lap, her dark blue gown hanging in heavy folds from her lithesome figure, the silken plaits of her golden hair wound tightly round her little head. She became the flowers, and they became her, and had she but raised her eyes to the mirror opposite she could not have failed to see what a fair picture they made together. But she never raised her eyes, and ever and anon as she worked a heavy drop splashed down on the waxen petals, or she was forced to pause and wipe away the tears obscuring her vision.

The wreath was finished at last, and Clara now sat motionless holding it on her lap, absorbed in a mournful reverie. No thought had as yet come to her that this death could in any way affect her own position; she was as yet too bewildered and benumbed

by the suddenness of the blow, for she had been much attached to her little charge. Her thoughts were all of the unfortunate parents thus stricken. Of what use were now their endless riches when they had lost their only darling? Some confused notion there may have been in her mind, that it was to her the heart-broken mother would doubtless turn for consolation when the first sharpness of the blow was spent. Was she not called upon henceforth to enact the part of daughter to the poor lady who was even now sobbing out her very soul within a darkened chamber?

Clara's reflections were presently interrupted by a knock at the door, followed by the appearance of a liveried footman.

'The Fräulein would be pleased to come down and speak to his Grace the Count,' was the message delivered.

'To the Countess, you mean?' asked Clara correcting.

'To the Count,' repeated the man. 'And he awaits the Fräulein in the large yellow saloon.'

'I shall be down directly,' said the young girl in some surprise, for she was not used to having any transactions with the master of the house, who, somewhat distant and formal in his manner, had always treated her with exquisite but taciturn politeness.

She left the room, holding the heavy white wreath slung over her arm, and went down the broad staircase still wondering why she had been sent for.

In the long gallery below, where she had so often played at ball, some workmen were busy putting up sable hangings over the doorway which marked the chamber of death. A tradesman holding a roll of black stuff, and a sacristan with a bundle of wax torches, were waiting on a bench; servants were standing about in awestruck groups exchanging scraps of ghastly gossip below their breath. Everything bore a deathlike stamp, and smelt, so to say, of crape and cypresses; everything in this vast, well-appointed house had got out of its usual groove, merely because one little girl had closed her eyes.

Clara passed down the gallery, and opened the door of the saloon which was at the further end.

This room was the ball-room of the château, and not used on ordinary occasions. The furniture ranged along the walls was of white and gilded woodwork in the Louis XV. style, and cushioned with amber damask; the curtains, amber damask likewise, and amber damask let into panels on the walls. Large pier-glasses, reaching to the ground, alternated with full-length por-

traits representing the most distinguished ancestors of the Froloff family—grimly aristocratic and uncompromising individuals. The floor was parquettèd with polished oaken boards, and from the ceiling was suspended a gigantic Venetian candelabra.

All this magnificence was but dimly seen in the gathering dusk, as was also the tall stiff figure of Count Froloff, aged about forty, quite as aristocratic and almost as uncompromising as his painted ancestors.

He bowed courteously as Clara entered, but made no attempt to offer her a seat, neither did he sit down himself. He scarcely glanced at her as he said:

‘Excuse me for asking you to come down here into this cold room, mademoiselle; I was afraid of disturbing the Countess’ (he always spoke of his wife as the Countess), ‘as her room is too near the other drawing-room. She is very seriously unwell, indeed——’

‘May I go in to see her?’ asked the young girl.

The Count frowned ever so slightly.

‘Oh dear, no; that is not to be thought of for a moment. In fact it was precisely on that account that I asked to see you, mademoiselle. You will understand of course that after our—our loss,’ he grew a shade paler, ‘we shall have to make various changes in the household, and as you have nothing further to detain you here, you will doubtless be glad to regain your own country without delay. Permit me to offer you six months’ salary in advance to compensate you for any inconvenience this change of plans may cause, and which, along with your travelling expenses, you will find contained in this envelope.’

He ceased speaking, and held out the paper towards her; but too much bewildered by the upshot of his words, she did not even put out her hand to receive it. Clara felt a rushing sound as of water in her ears, and convulsively she clasped the large white garland to her breast as though to gain support by leaning on it. Dismissed! dismissed! was that what it meant?

‘You want me to go away?’ she gasped out at last with stupid inquiry. Even now she thought she could hardly have heard aright.

The Count gave a slight, a very slight, sniff of his fine-cut nostrils. How coarsely those *bourgeois* people always expressed themselves. He was surprised at this girl who had always appeared to be quite harmless, quite negatively ladylike, being betrayed into such uncouth phraseology.

'It will, I fear, be necessary for us to part,' was the way he put it, correctively.

'And when?' she inquired, still bewildered.

'Oh, whenever you please; just at your own convenience,' said the nobleman in the same irreproachable tone of conventional politeness. 'I would not wish to hurry you; but, only on account of the Countess, it would be better if you were not to meet her again.'

'Do you mean not say good-bye to her?' asked Clara, like a child learning a lesson.

'Just so; I wish to avoid whatever might agitate her, by reminding her of—what we have lost. As soon as she has sufficiently recovered, and—— all is over, I shall take her to Italy for the winter, but I am anxious that nothing should occur in the meantime to upset her, and you will understand that your presence——' here the Count came to a standstill, counting on the intelligence of Fräulein Elsinger for deciphering the rest of the phrase. He felt that he had already needlessly gone out of his way in condescending to explain himself thus far. But the young German's obtuseness baffled him again as she repeated, interrogatively:

'My presence——?'

'Will, of course, remind her painfully of our poor darling,' he said rather testily. 'And then, of course—we do not mean to reproach you; everything is in the hands of God—but the unfortunate chance which made you the indirect cause: the long row on the river, perhaps wet feet overlooked—— But pray do not distress yourself'—as Clara showed signs of beginning to sob—'it can do no good now'—waving off her emotion with a half impatient gesture, which seemed to say, 'For mercy's sake let us keep to business, and spare me the exhibition of your private feelings, which can in nowise interest me.'

'There is no use in dwelling on this painful subject,' he resumed, presently, 'and I think there is nothing more to be said but for me to wish you a very prosperous journey. My manager will tell you the hours of the *diligence*, and will see that one of my carriages conveys you to the nearest post-station. He will arrange all details,' and again Count Froloff tendered the large yellow envelope for her acceptance.

She took it this time mechanically, but still remained standing rooted to the spot, her large blue eyes wandering helplessly over the room, as though seeking for help somewhere.

'But, but,' she stammered at last, 'I had thought—I had hoped——'

'You had hoped?' repeated the nobleman, with freezing interrogation, while the portrait of his distinguished ancestors frowning down from the wall, aristocratically supercilious, seemed to be asking the same question. 'You had hoped? What? Of us? Are we not miles apart? What can we have in common?'

'Nothing,' she said faintly, turning to leave the room, while Count Froloff held open the door for her with stately courtesy.

'Nothing,' she repeated bitterly to herself, as she walked down the long gallery. 'Of course, nothing! How could I ever have been fool enough to expect it!' The scales had fallen from her eyes and she wondered at her former simplicity. How was she ever foolish enough to believe that she could be for anything in the life of these great people? They had only valued her as a servant, a machine, and now that her services were no longer required they had cast her off like a worn-out glove, like a useless machine, without pausing to inquire whether the poor machine had any claim on their tenderness. Everyone would tell her, no doubt, that her late employers had behaved honourably, even generously, towards her, and that she had no just ground for complaint. The yellow envelope she held in her hand, which felt so uncompromisingly hard and stiff, was ample remuneration for her services.

III.

CLARA walked into the room which had been turned into a temporary *chapelle ardente*, and almost violently she flung down the wreath on to the bier; then, without a glance at the little dead child, she turned, and quickly ascending the staircase, re-entered her chamber and set about the preparations for her departure with feverish haste.

She would not tarry a day longer in this great house where there was no room for her, nor among these great people who would have nothing more in common with her, not even their grief. Her pride had been slow to wake up, but now, once roused, it would not go to sleep again. She felt as though every morsel she tasted in this house would choke her, as if the very roof which sheltered her were heavy and oppressive. A few minutes ago she would have been terrified at the notion of having to take a journey of many hundred miles unprotected, she who never yet in her life

had travelled a mile alone. But now she had no room left for fear, and was only conscious of a burning desire to be gone.

She made all her preparations with breathless energy, and packed till late into the night, having arranged to depart at early dawn next morning.

When at last she rose to her feet, having just locked the solitary trunk which contained the whole of her not very extensive worldly possessions, it had struck eleven o'clock.

Clara contemplated her work with some satisfaction, and felt proud of herself, as a practical and experienced traveller. Oh, she felt quite equal to going all over the world alone, without protection. She was perfectly well able to take care of herself and avoid all the usual accidents which occur to timid or silly women. She took some pleasure in reviewing all those unpleasant possibilities which she meant to avoid by her prudence and energy. Firstly, murder, the most decidedly unpleasant of all the unpleasant contingencies which usually suggest themselves to timorous females. Unpleasant, certainly, but then so easy to be avoided, if only the unprotected female were careful not to step into the travelling compartment occupied by the mysterious villain, easy to be recognised by his coal-black beard and the false glitter of his dark eye, even if the dagger did not happen to be peeping out from under his cloak—nothing could in fact be simpler, and why dirty one's boots by walking into a puddle when there is a dry road alongside?

Secondly, there was robbery to be considered, not quite so easy to provide against, since pickpockets, in particular, she knew were in the habit of adopting all sorts of strange disguises, without any distinctive badge of their trade to mark them. But here again, after half a minute's reflection, the shrewd damsel discovered an infallible antidote to this evil. No one need really have their pocket picked unless they pleased. You had only to put your money—not in your pocket, but somewhere else; and with a smile of compassion for those unpractical people who allowed their pockets to be picked, Clara put her hand into hers in order to draw out the stiff yellow envelope containing her salary.

She had not thought of it since the moment Count Froloff had handed it over to her, and was somewhat dismayed to find her pocket empty. This was scarcely a promising beginning to the unprotected journey. She must either have dropped it in the gallery or left it below near the little coffin.

It was distasteful to Clara to have to return to that room thus

in the dead of night, but there was no other alternative ; so, taking a taper-stand, she made the best of her way through the silent passages, feeling rather like a thief bound on some guilty errand.

The wax torches were still burning brightly round the little catafalque, and nodding in one corner was a drowsy domestic, who gazed at her with sleepy incomprehension as she proceeded to examine the flowers on the coffin. Her wreath lay half buried under newer and fresher garlands, adorned with richer bows of ribbon, offerings from wealthy neighbours which had been placed above hers. Even here she was not wanted, it seemed.

A minute's search, however, brought the yellow envelope to light, concealed in a fold of the draperies, and clutching it tightly in her hand, Clara stood still for a moment to take a last look at the dead child, which, bedded among that profusion of blossom, looked almost like another white flower.

It was a sweet little face she gazed upon, and Clara had dearly loved her little pupil ; yet now, in the revulsion of wounded feeling which burned within her, she gazed at it coldly, almost hardly, and there were no tears in her eyes. Her jaundiced glance seemed to detect on those baby lips some shade of the same unapproachable *hauteur* she had seen on the father's face ; the cold, white forehead looked as icily proud as those of the canvas ancestors in the ball-room.

The incident with the money had given Clara something of a fright, as she reflected how terrible would have been her position had the money been really lost or stolen. What could she have done on finding herself destitute, so many hundred miles away from her home ? She felt sure that she would rather have died than apply again to the cold, haughty, courteous master of the house. How to avoid a recurrence of this danger was her principal thought, as she regained her room and counted over the crisp bank-notes. She laid aside a portion of the money, just what would suffice for paying her expenses to K——, where she would reach the railway, and all her worst troubles would be over ; but the bulk of her little fortune she wished to secure beyond all danger of loss or theft. Of course she would not put it in her trunk ; boxes sometimes went astray, or were occasionally tampered with in Russia ; then she passed all her articles of clothing in successive review as suitable receptacles for the notes.

She had heard of people carrying about their money in the stocking, but this must be extremely uncomfortable, Clara thought ; also sewing it into her stays, as bad heroines are often

made to do in novels, was scarcely a pleasant idea ; then her eyes fell on the travelling clothes which lay ready on the bed—a grey merino cloak lined and trimmed with grey Astrachan fur, and with muff and cap to match. Might she not sew her money into the muff? or, better still, into the cap itself? for ‘a muff might be dropped or lost, whereas I could not well manage to lose my cap unless I lost my head as well,’ she reflected.

Clara felt it to be almost a stroke of genius, as she unpicked the grey silk lining and introduced the precious notes into the opening. She need not take them out till she reached K——, where she was to rest one night, and in the meantime they were as safe as safe.

This fur suit, the only handsome article of dress she possessed, had been a present from Countess Froloff only some days previously. ‘You do not know our Russian winters, my dear,’ she had said to the girl kindly. ‘You will require something warm to wrap yourself up with in our sledging parties.’ This had been last week, and she had then felt like a daughter of the house almost, while now she was a poor outcast sent forth alone into the wide world.

IV.

Two days after his departure from St. Petersburg, Hugo Weyprecht found himself pacing the road at the entrance of a small country town, as he waited for the arrival of the *diligence*.

He had been dropped here by some other conveyance earlier in the day, for his mission had involved various stoppages and zigzaggings from off the main track, much bargaining and wrangling with cunning Jewish contractors or obtuse country bumpkins. Now he was about to take the regular *diligence* as far as K——, where his business was to terminate.

He was finding the time of waiting very long, for there was absolutely nothing in this filthy little town to attract even the passing notice of a stranger. The frost had somewhat relaxed, but the air was chill and the atmosphere dense with the presage of an approaching snowstorm, which, in the shape of a thick white mist, brooded over the place, obscuring the view and giving to the nearest and commonest objects a far-off unreal appearance. Like the breath of some colossal monster it was floating everywhere in fleecy flakes, intangible and transparent, yet distorting each object within its range ; giving to the stunted willows on either

side of the road the guise of crooked spectres, and to the hooded crows flying homeward to roost the semblance of huge black griffins.

'We shall have snow before long,' muttered the young man to himself. 'If only the roads are not blocked up! It would be awkward to be delayed on the way, and I shall not breathe freely again till I have got rid of——' He did not finish the phrase, which he had spoken half aloud, for the sound of approaching bells had arrested his attention.

'The *diligence* at last!' he exclaimed with relief, as he distinguished a dark mass advancing towards him.

Fancifully unreal through the fog appeared the figures of three white horses, looking no more substantial than if formed of the floating mists around. But it was not the *diligence* Hugo Weyprecht recognised, as he stepped aside to let the phantom equipage pass by, but a small light open carriage in which reclined a single figure.

Hugo could only distinguish a vision of golden hair, very wide open blue eyes, and a slender youthful figure which like everything else seemed wrapped in curling grey mists, as she floated by. She looked like the queen of the mists herself.

So at least thought Hugo Weyprecht, as for full two minutes he stood staring open-mouthed at the retreating carriage. Then he began retracing his steps towards the post-house, in the faint hope of catching another glimpse of the beautiful vision. Evidently some great lady travelling in her own carriage, he thought, a Russian princess most likely, and he gave a sigh and then smiled a little at his own folly. What had he to do with Russian princesses? The chances were he would never in his life come across her again, and it could do him no good even to hear her name.

No harm either, he reflected a moment later, determined to put the question to the first person he met.

There was no need of so doing, however, for as he stepped into the untidy post-house courtyard, to his unbounded surprise there in the centre of the yard was the lady herself, standing beside a small black trunk. There was no sign of either carriage or servants, apparently they had vanished into mist like Cinderella's fairy equipage.

Seen there at close quarters, she appeared less unreal but quite as lovely as she had done at first sight, even though her misty raiment now disclosed itself as grey merino and Astrachan fur.

As Hugo approached she was fumbling with the lock of her box, which had sprung open on the way.

'May I be allowed to assist you?' he ventured to ask in a very respectful tone.

The girl glanced quickly at him with an inquiring look.

'I do not speak Russian,' she said, in her native language.

'But I am German also,' cried Hugo, delighted to have found a bond of union between himself and this exquisite creature.

But his eager tone had alarmed her, and after scanning him for a moment with naïve suspicion, she coldly refused his offer of assistance.

'Thank you, I do not require any help; I can manage it very well alone.'

'As you please,' said Hugo discomfited, withdrawing from her side and returning to the open street, where in a state of considerable irritation he paced up and down smoking his cigar.

'Bah!' he exclaimed in disgust some ten minutes later, throwing away his weed. 'Everything is bad in this wretched country; not even the cigars are passable!'

He re-entered the courtyard, studiously refraining from glancing at that slender figure in the grey fur jacket, and was about to enter the uncongenial bar-room, when an obviously artificial little cough caused him to turn and see her standing in a somewhat dejected attitude near the still unclosed trunk.

On her side she had been examining him furtively, and had come to the conclusion that he did not look so very dangerous.

'Mr.—Mr.—German,' she began in some embarrassment, 'I find I cannot get the lock to close after all. Perhaps I am not strong enough,' she concluded with a sigh. She said no more, but her blue eyes were plainly asking him to help her now, and to forgive his former repulse.

It needed no more to make his ill-humour vanish, and directly he was at her side, bending down over the obstreperous lock, while sitting on the trunk she endeavoured to weigh down the lid.

'I am afraid we must change parts,' he said a minute later, looking up laughingly into her eyes from his kneeling posture. 'You are not near heavy enough,' and taking her place, he easily got the obdurate lid to close, and the lock was firmly secured.

'Thank you,' she said gravely, drawing on her gloves again and sitting down on the trunk.

'Shall you not catch cold out here?' now demanded Hugo, for he felt that the service he had rendered entitled him to pursue the acquaintance.

'But I cannot go inside that horrible room,' she answered shuddering. 'It is so hot and stuffy, and there is such a dreadful noise, and the men look so rough. Besides, the *diligence* will be here directly.'

The *diligence*! Was it possible that this dainty-looking creature was to be his travelling companion? Hugo felt his heart leap up strangely at the thought, but he still was puzzled as to her apparent isolation. What had become of her carriage and servants?

'The *diligence*?' he said interrogatively. 'The *diligence* to K——? That is the one I am waiting for myself; but I fear you will find it very rough and uncomfortable, much more so than travelling in your own carriage.'

'My own carriage!' she exclaimed, betrayed into momentary laughter. 'Count Froloff's carriage you mean! They were kind enough to send me this far,' she continued bitterly, forgetting that she was speaking to a stranger. 'And now I must just shift for myself as best I can. Of course it is nothing to them how I reach, or whether I ever reach, my home. But I am quite able to take care of myself,' she said abruptly, drawing up into renewed reserve. 'And—and I am not at all frightened.'

Hugo smiled a little.

'Then the carriage I saw has left you here?'

'Yes, they just drove me into the yard, and put me down with my box as if I had been a bundle of wares myself, and then they turned and drove away to the inn at the other end of the town. Why should they have stayed? They are not my servants, and are not paid to wait on me.'

Hugo Weyprecht now began to understand the state of the case. This was no great lady such as he had taken her for at first sight, but a simple girl of his own rank of life, a humble companion or governess apparently; and far from experiencing any sort of disappointment at the discovery, he was only conscious of a great sense of relief.

At this moment the clumsy *diligence* rolled heavily into the yard, the jaded horses were replaced by less jaded ones, and ten minutes later the conveyance was ready to start,

V.

LOVE at first sight is no mere severed invention of the poet's overheated brain, and despite the inrooted egoism of our terribly practical and matter-of-fact age, it is, I am inclined to believe, of far more frequent occurrence than is generally suspected. If, for instance, the victims—those suddenly stricken—could be registered statistically, we should, doubtless, find them greatly to outnumber those who are yearly struck dead by lightning. Modern science has furnished us with a means of resisting the fire of heaven in the shape of lightning conductors, thanks to which many people are annually saved from an untimely end; but for that inward fire which, with equal and unexpected force, can strike a man surely but secretly to his heart's core, no lightning conductor has yet been found.

Hugo Weyprecht wished for no lightning conductor, and made not the slightest effort to struggle against his fate. From the first glimpse he had caught of Clara floating past him in the mist, he had felt drawn towards her as he had never felt drawn towards woman before, and by the time he had handed her into the *diligence*, he had quite made up his mind to win her for his wife if she could be won.

He never could have told himself what it was about her that had thus made of him her slave in a few minutes. It was not her beauty merely, for he had seen plenty more beautiful women, nor was it her childish helplessness, nor her equally childish assumption of independence, nor was it the ungraciousness with which she had at first repulsed him, nor yet the sweetness to which this had afterwards given way. Perhaps it was all of these taken together, or more probably it was because she was just herself and he was just himself, and that, therefore, whatever she had done or left undone would have appeared perfect in his eyes.

For something, no doubt, in this inevitable result, may be reckoned the delightful surprise of meeting a countrywoman in an obscure corner of a strange land. The passionate, dark-eyed, over-coloured beauties of the country had no charm for this serious young German, who, on first beholding Clara's limpid eyes and soft flaxen tresses, felt as though, after a surfeit of lonely steppes and gloomy pine-forests, he had again caught a glimpse of the laughing vineyards and blue Rhine waters of his beloved Fatherland,

As for her—well, of course, no properly-conducted damsel ever does fall in love at first sight. Such a thing is unheard of, and the lightning darts I spoke of can only be supposed to affect the coarser sex, just as in a forest of mixed trees the thunderbolt will always select the sturdy oak to fall upon, while it glides harmless betwixt the smooth beech stems.

Thus Clara, beech-like, considered herself intact, and hardly noticed how, in the course of the thirty-six hours they had travelled together, she had imperceptibly glided into intimacy with her countryman, and had unconsciously initiated him into all the little events of her uneventful life. She had told him all about her rather melancholy childhood, the dull home with a peevish old aunt, then her journey to Russia, the short bright summer with all its pleasures, and the sudden collapse of her hopes when her little pupil had died. The only thing she had not happened to mention to him as yet was about her money, not from any want of confidence, but simply because there had been no occasion for so doing.

They had had various other travelling companions for short stages at a time—two old ladies, an invalid gentleman with a servant, a friar, a fat horsedealer, and some nuns; but these had all successively dropped off, and on the second morning Hugo and Clara were the only inside occupants of the stage-coach.

‘How easy travelling is after all?’ she exclaimed thoughtlessly. ‘By this evening we shall be at K——, in sight of the railway, and after that it will be all plain sailing. Do you know,’ she added, in a more confidential tone, ‘that I was actually frightened beforehand at the idea of this journey?’

‘Yes, I know you were afraid,’ answered Hugo quietly, ‘and I will tell you something else: you could not just at first make up your mind as to whether I were a robber, or merely a harmless individual.’

Clara laughed somewhat guiltily.

‘What made you think that?’

‘Then it is true, is it not?’

‘Perhaps,’ she admitted; ‘but who told you?’

‘Nobody. I don’t always require to be told things,’ said Hugo in the same tone. ‘I know a great many things about you that you have never told me. At least, not with your lips.’

‘You lay claim to be all-knowing—to guess people’s thoughts?’

‘I did not speak of people,’ he replied with emphasis. ‘I

only spoke about *you*. I have never tried to guess the thoughts of another woman.'

He spoke so earnestly that Clara felt herself colouring under the directness of his gaze. In her embarrassment she made an effort to turn off the subject.

'At any rate, I am not quite as transparent as you seem to think. I can keep secrets when I choose. For instance, I will lay any wager that you do not know where I have put my money?'

'Will you give me three guesses, like in the fairy tale of Rumpelstiltskin?'

'Oh, yes; thirty guesses if you like,' laughed Clara. 'I am quite safe.'

'I only ask for three; and what will be my reward if I guess correctly?'

'You will never guess; besides, I have no rewards to give.'

'You have something to give,' said Hugo very low. 'But I am willing to take my chance and trust to your generosity. Let me see, the money is in your trunk hidden under a false bottom.'

Clara shook her head.

'In the sole of your left boot,' said Hugo, after some apparent meditation.

'Wrong again,' she cried. 'Now for the last guess.'

Then, without preparation, he quickly said, 'It is in your fur cap. I knew it all along.'

Clara now stared at him dumfounded. It was not that she had any objection to him knowing her secret, for, had he failed to guess, she was on the point of telling him herself. Besides, he looked so upright, so honest, that she was beginning to feel herself ready to trust him with something far more precious than gold. But that he should have guessed her secret appeared to her little short of supernatural, for she did not know that every lover is a magician, and that his eyes are all-seeing.

'How could you have known?'

'Nothing simpler,' said Hugo, smiling a little at her consternation. 'I noticed how very careful you always were to make sure that your fur cap was firmly secured on your head, and that you never by any chance laid it aside for a minute, even when resting in the heated inn-parlour. In your sleep, too, you never forgot it, and instinctively put up your hand to feel if it were safe whenever the carriage jolted.'

'And I thought I had hidden it so well,' said Clara ruefully. 'And now it seems that everyone has guessed my secret.'

'Hardly that. You may make your mind easy that your fur cap is the last place in which robbers will think of looking for money. No one is likely to study you as closely as I have done, and yet'—he continued with a sigh—'there is one thing I have not yet succeeded in guessing. Would that I had indeed the power to guess your thoughts!'

Clara made no answer. She was playing nervously with the shabby green tassel of the window, and looking out on to the snowy landscape with unseeing eyes. Presently, however, feeling that this silence was growing too significant, she turned round again to her companion, and with a rather obvious effort at lightness she said:

'Well, since you affect to be all-knowing, perhaps you can likewise name the exact amount of money my head is at present worth?'

'How can I put a price upon what is priceless?'

'Nonsense,' said Clara petulantly, feeling provoked with herself for not being more mistress of the situation, for try as she would to be evasive everything she said seemed only to drive the conversation more surely into one momentous groove. 'That is not what I mean, but what is the amount of the fortune I carry inside my cap? Can you tell me that?'

'Well, no,' replied Hugo. 'Here I must confess myself worsted at last, for even if you are transparent, grey fur is not, and so it may just as well be hundreds as thousands, or else glittering diamonds, which are sewed into your cap. Only if they are diamonds'—he added laughing—'they must be very hard and uncomfortable, and are likely to give you a headache if their value is something very overpowering.'

Clara now laughed also in her former natural manner, forgetting the momentary embarrassment.

'Well, no, there is not much danger of my head ever being bowed down beneath the weight of Koh-i-noors,' she answered, removing the cap and turning the lining upwards. 'Seven hundred roubles in paper money; perhaps not very much to some people, but they are all I have or am ever likely to possess. See here; I ripped up the lining at one side and have distributed the notes all round the edge, so as to avoid any appearance of thickness. Do you see? Is it not neatly done?'

'Very neatly indeed,' said Hugo, but he was looking more at

the uncovered wealth of her golden plaits than at the grey fur cap as he said it.

‘And you think the money is safe?’

‘As safe as in the Bank of England,’ he returned. ‘Not a soul will ever suspect if you do not choose to enlighten them.’

Clara gave a little sigh of satisfaction as she re-settled the cap on her head.

After a pause Hugo resumed :

‘Why did you say just now that it was easy to travel alone?’

‘Because it is easy.’

‘You have never tried. You are not alone.’

‘Not alone?’

‘Well, no, unless you are cruel enough to count me for nothing. Am I, indeed, nothing?’

Nothing! Clara suddenly remembered that he had been everything and done everything ever since they started. He was so thoughtful and quicksighted in anticipating her wants and comforts, in guessing all her wishes, that she had hardly noticed it, and had grown already to feel his protection as quite natural and as a matter of course. She had not thought about it till now, and all at once she began to perceive what it really meant.

Her heart was beating very fast, for she felt that a crisis was at hand. She hardly knew whether the sensation was pleasant or the reverse, and was only conscious of a girlish shrinking, which made her wish to put it off at all events. Not to-day, not just now, not in this dreadful jolting vehicle. How could she think clearly and know her own mind while the rough motion of the *diligence* seemed to be jumbling up all her thoughts together?

‘But you are you, and I am I,’ she began, rather lamely trying to ward off what she dreaded. ‘I mean that it is only by chance that we have been travelling together. You have been very kind, I know, for you are not obliged to take care of me.’ But, in her innocent confusion, Clara had just conjured up the very danger she was trying to avoid.

Hugo seized her hand, which, after a weak resistance, remained in his.

‘But if I desire no greater happiness than to take care of you through life? If my only hope, my only wish is to be allowed——’

The heavy jolting vehicle here came suddenly to a standstill, and the guard putting in his head at the window startled them

by the information that the *diligence* could not possibly get up the next hill unless lightened of its occupants.

Hugo had speedily dropped the young girl's hand, and jumped out determined to bully, or if necessary beat, the driver into proceeding, but a glance at the scene showed him that this was no imaginary difficulty.

So engrossed had they been with each other's society during the last hour of the drive, that neither of the coach inmates had perceived the change which had come over the landscape. The snow had been getting deeper and deeper as they proceeded, and now the horses had come to a standstill, unable to drag the unwieldy vehicle any further uphill. There was nothing for it but to get out and perform the ascent on foot, and Hugo found himself obliged to lend his assistance in pushing the carriage from behind. Luckily there was a village, or rather a wretched hamlet, at the top of the hill, and here, within the dirty kitchen of the rustic pot-house, our travellers were forced to take refuge along with coachmen, peasants, servants, and such like objectionable individuals.

Great was their consternation when they were informed that the *diligence* could not possibly proceed further that day. This early fall of snow had surprised them all before the sledge stage-coaches had been got into working order, and a wheeled vehicle could not possibly work its way through the snowdrift which encumbered the road in advance. The *diligence* coming from the opposite direction had been brought up in the same manner, and was likewise waiting its release some miles ahead.

'How far is it to K——?' asked Hugo.

'About eight hours when the road is clear, but in this weather out of the question. The gentlefolk will have to stay here overnight.'

'Impossible?' cried Clara, looking ready to cry. 'We cannot stay in this dreadful hole an hour longer. Is there no other way of getting on?'

A very unprepossessing Jew with red hair and a squint now stepped forward and joined the conversation. Hugo had meanwhile left the room to reconnoitre for more congenial quarters.

'Yes, gracious lady, there is another way. By leaving the high road and taking a sledge you can be at K—— this evening. There is a country track which will take you there far quicker than the *diligence* could have done.'

‘I knew it!’ cried Clara triumphant. ‘Have you got a sledge, and can you drive us?’

‘How should old Isaac not have a sledge, my pretty lady? As good a sledge as you can wish to see. I am going to drive a gentleman to K—— to-day; we shall start in an hour, and if the lady chooses to go with us there is plenty room.’

Hugo, soon after returning to the room, was surprised and not overpleased to find Clara in deep conversation with the ill-looking Hebrew.

‘It is all settled,’ she called out to him gleefully, and she gave the gist of what the Jew had told her.

‘But the road you speak of leads through a deep forest, does it not?’ said Hugo consulting his map. He did not appear to be altogether delighted with the scheme.

‘A forest, noble gentleman? Only a few trees there may be, perhaps. And what if there is a forest? The snow will be less deep in the wood, and the wind less cold. May my body be burned in eternal fires if the road be not a good one.’

‘Yes, yes,’ said Clara impatiently, ‘it is all right; let us have the sledge by all means.’

‘I beseech of you, Fräulein, to let me speak a few words to you alone, before deciding,’ said Hugo in a low voice; ‘I have something important to say to you.’

But Clara, feeling sure that she knew what it was he was about to say, feigned not to understand.

‘No, no, what is the use of delay, let us decide at once; if we lose our time we shall not arrive by daylight.’

‘But indeed it would be better to wait for the *diligence* to-morrow. It would be ever so much more comfortable and more safe,’ urged Hugo with a last effort at dissuading her.

‘More safe!’ said Clara scornfully. ‘What can happen to us in a sledge? The worst can only be an upset, and that is nothing in the snow.’

‘Perhaps the gentleman is afraid of wolves,’ put in the Jew facetiously. ‘See, see! the beautiful young lady is by far the best man of the two, she is not afraid.’

Hugo merely shrugged his shoulders, as though it were not worth while to assert his valour before such vermin, and merely said:

‘I have got my revolver, which will be answer enough for either wolf or man who comes in my way; but, all the same, I am of opinion that it would be wiser to wait for the *diligence* to-morrow.’

'No, no,' said Clara, slightly nettled at his obstinacy on this point, and perhaps flattered by her courage being praised even by a ragged Hebrew. 'I have quite made up my mind. I shall go by the sledge, at all events. You can do as you please; I told you I was able to travel alone,' she finished playfully.

A very attentive observer might have fancied that a shade of something, either displeasure or disappointment, had passed over the red-haired Jew's face at mention of the revolver, but whatever it may have been it was gone instantly, as he glided from the room with obsequious alacrity to get ready the sledge.

VI.

IN less than an hour the sledge was at the door, a rough concern of unpainted boards, but able to hold half a dozen people very comfortably. Hugo handed in Clara, and then got in opposite her. She feigned a little surprise, for they had not exchanged a word since her decision.

'Oh, are you coming too, after all? I thought you had made up your mind to travel by the *diligence*.'

'Of course I am going if you are,' he said gravely, and it seemed to her almost a little severely. 'You did not surely think I was going to let you go through the forest alone with strangers?'

He himself had been a stranger to her only two days ago, but he did not seem to remember this, nor did she. A great many things can happen in two days, and a journey of this kind is sometimes equal to weeks or even months of conventional intercourse.

There were two other passengers besides themselves, a small highly-coloured man with a great deal of fur about him, and a lanky red-nosed individual wearing a shabby green overcoat. The ill-favoured Jew took the reins, and they drove away.

The snow had now ceased falling, probably because there was not any more to fall, and the sun was now free to shine out again, relieving the monotony of the snow-clad landscape by diamond and crystal touches.

Leaving the high-road soon after passing the village, the sledge struck into a side track over a desolate plain leading in the direction of the large pine forest which loomed black in the distance. A rough cart-track at other times, but to-day the road was smooth and

even, as though carpeted by the richest velvet. The air was keen but pleasant, for there was not a breath of wind, and after the confined travelling of the two past days the change was welcome.

Clara enjoyed it as she leant back in the sledge, and thought over the events of the last two days. She felt so sure and safe near this tall grave man, who from the first moment had assumed such a tone of protecting authority over her, and she was fain to confess that it was very sweet to be cared for and protected in this manner, she who had never yet had anyone to care for and protect her. Her childish assumption of independence had been no more than an innocent piece of coquetry, for no delicate-minded girl likes to surrender to a man after so short an acquaintance. Now that she had leisure to think she felt no doubt that her answer to that question, interrupted just now in the stage-coach, would be Yes; but yet she preferred that this all-important Yes should be spoken rather to-morrow than to-day, and was not sorry for the presence of those two other passengers, which rendered impossible all intimate conversation.

Hugo on his part did not seem to appreciate so highly the society of his fellow travellers; more especially the red-nosed man in the green coat he eyed suspiciously, receiving his efforts at conversation with icy politeness, and failing even to be touched by his evident solicitude for the comfort and warmth of his companion, for ever fidgeting with the rugs and blankets, and inquiring a dozen times in the first half hour whether the lady were quite comfortably seated, or if the gentleman were not in danger of freezing.

Soon the forest was reached, and they were speeding along between rows of sombre fir-trees, standing straight and close together like soldiers drawn up for battle. Every branch was piled up thick with furry snow, and now and then a twig discharged its contents on their heads as they drove along. Clara had to shake her fur cap repeatedly to free it from the snowy burden. Sometimes as she did so, her eyes sought Hugo's gaze with a confidential expression.

'See! my head is oppressed with the weight of diamonds,' she said once, as brushing against a low overhanging branch the clustering fringe of icicles detached itself with a crisp sound as of broken glass, and came raining down thickly over her head and shoulders.

Despite his ill-humour, Hugo Weyprecht was betrayed into

a genuine laugh as she thus appealed to him with irresistible merriment.

'And now your fortune is all gone,' he said, bending forward and helping her to brush away the broken diamonds that were clinging all over the grey Astrachan fur.

Then Clara laughed, delighted at feeling that she had a secret in common with him, and her laugh rang out so clear and joyous through the frosty air, that the little fur-clad man laughed also without knowing why, which made Clara and Hugo laugh again, because they alone had the clue to all this merriment. Only the red-nosed man did not laugh, perhaps because he failed to perceive any point in the joke, but went on fidgeting with the blankets as before.

All the undergrowth of little fir-bushes was buried many inches deep in snow, their outlines totally effaced, or only barely indicated by a slight excrescence in the ermine carpet. Of a sudden the sledge made a violent lurch out of the track, there was a bound, a scuffle, and then the four passengers found themselves struggling in the snow. The driver had apparently mistaken the track, and driven them right over one of the buried bushes, which had thus caused the overthrow.

Hugo's first care was to disentangle Clara from her position; the next was to feel for his revolver.

'It is gone!' he exclaimed in dismay, drawing out his hand from the empty pocket. 'It must have fallen out here. It cannot be far off,' and together with the red-nosed and obliging fellow passenger he proceeded to search the premises. But in vain. The revolver was not to be found, not in the snow, not in the sledge, nor in the surrounding bushes.

'You villain!' now exclaimed Hugo, addressing the squinting coachman. 'I do believe this is your doing. You upset us on purpose. Where is my revolver?'

'Wai! Wai!' moaned the Hebrew, who was sitting on a tree stump rocking his body to and fro with an agonised expression. 'Can the noble gentleman suspect poor old Isaac of upsetting the sledge on purpose, when he has nearly killed himself in wishing to serve the noble Pan¹ and the beautiful lady? Wai! Wai! May I never scent garlic again if my poor old bones are not broken! and all for serving the noble gentleman!'

Neither threats nor persuasion could extract anything further from the man, and no amount of search produced the missing re-

¹ Gentleman.

volver. With a moody brow Hugo at last ordered the Jew to drive on, warning him severely against any repetition of the like tricks.

It seemed, however, as if his suspicions had been without foundation, as for upwards of three hours they drove on without further interruption. There was no more laughing and joking, but unconsciously Hugo relaxed his vigilant attitude. In less than two hours they might hope to reach the town.

The forest had now become very dark, for here the stems were of gigantic size, and the afternoon was already well advanced. Nothing was there to be seen on either side but the pine stems retreating in endless vista.

Hugo had turned his head to gaze at the blood-red glory of the winter sun, showing at one point between the trunks, when suddenly the sledge came again to a standstill, but without overturning this time. The driver began to descend from his seat very slowly.

‘What is the matter?’

‘Gracious gentleman, I think the left horse has got a stone in his hoof!’

‘Not very likely, in this deep snow,’ objected Hugo.

‘Then perhaps it may be a twig,’ Isaac admitted, ‘but lame he assuredly is. May my only daughter never know happiness again if there is not something inside the hoof.’

‘Make sharp about it, then.’

But the Jew did not seem inclined to make sharp. He moved as if cramped by rheumatism in every limb, probably on account of his late mishap, and then feebly set to work, alternately scraping and hammering at the horse’s hoof, all the while loudly lamenting that he had ruined a good horse as well as breaking his own bones in the service of the gentleman.

‘If you do not drive on at once I shall beat you to a jelly,’ at last roared Hugo, losing all patience; so, trembling sorely, the Jew remounted the driver’s seat. He took another two minutes, however, to get fairly settled in his place, and was still fumbling with the reins when the passengers became aware that the sledge was surrounded by half a dozen men, who had silently emerged from behind the giant stems.

‘Wai! Wai!’ shrieked the Jew, throwing down the reins.

‘We shall be murdered and robbed. Wai! Wai!’

‘Drive on in God’s name!’ roared Hugo with stentorian voice, but the luckless coachman, apparently paralysed by terror, could do nothing but rock his body and moan ‘Wai! Wai!’

'Give us your money, good gentlemen, and we shall do you no harm,' said the foremost of the band, advancing to the side of the sledge, while two others had planted themselves in front of the horses, and two others were busying themselves in cutting through the ropes by which Clara's trunk was secured behind the sledge. 'We are poor devils who are dying of hunger and have no other way of getting our bread.'

Clara, trembling like an aspen leaf, had now clutched hold of Hugo's arm.

'I am frightened,' she murmured into his ear. 'Take care of me now,—and always!'

'I will,' he answered very low.

'Give me your money,' now repeated the foremost robber, addressing himself more particularly to Hugo, and putting out his hand as though to assist him in unbuttoning his coat.

Hugo had grown rather pale, but did not for a moment lose his presence of mind. Clara's little hand was still clasping his arm.

'My fine fellows,' he said, addressing the robbers in fluent Russian, 'we are in your power, it seems, and resistance would be foolish. It is your good luck and our bad luck which has brought us here to-day. The only one among us who has any money is this young lady, and she will give it to you, I am sure, if you will not molest her further, and let us drive on quietly. Permit me,' he said to Clara, gently disengaging his arm from her clinging grasp; and to her stupefaction he now proceeded to take the fur cap off her head. 'Here is the cap; you will find the money sewed into the lining. You do not believe me?' as the robber shook his head suspiciously. 'See if I do not speak the truth,' and he ripped up a portion of the lining, disclosing the rainbow-coloured bank-notes to the amount of 700 roubles.

The man now eagerly grasped the cap, and his companions bent over him examining the booty; the two men holding the horses relaxed their grasp for a moment, afraid of coming too short in the *partage*.

Hugo saw his opportunity, and quick as lightning he had swung himself on to the driver's seat, and snatched the reins from the moaning Jew. One stroke of the whip had caused the horses to plunge violently, and then start off at a headlong pace, which soon left the robbers far behind, quarrelling loudly over the contents of Clara's fur cap.

Not for full ten minutes did Hugo relax his speed. He urged

on the beasts to their utmost strength, lashing them unmercifully till their sides were streaked with bloody foam.

The four other occupants of the sledge had been paralysed at the rapidity of his movement. The Jew did not attempt either excuse or explanation, nor did he try to regain hold of the reins; the red-nosed man sat staring open-mouthed before him, having even forgotten to button up his coat; and the fur-clad man was shaking as though with a fit of ague.

As to Clara, stupefaction is far too weak a word to express her sensations. Utterly terrified as she had been at sight of the bandits, her annihilation had been complete at Hugo's unexpected and inexplicable treachery. To think that a man, who had all but acknowledged his love for her only a few hours previously, should thus coolly have sacrificed her at the first danger, was incredible. On the part of any man to act so towards a helpless young girl would be vile, on his part it was simply monstrous. The mariner who in calm weather feels his trusty ship go down without warning, or the man who beholds a faithful dog suddenly metamorphosed into a roaring lion, could not be more dumfounded than was Clara, as with blanched face and wild dilated eyes she gazed unseeing before her. Her hair, loosened from its hold as Hugo had removed the cap, had fallen in long untidy coils over her shoulders; the little curls on her forehead were lifted by the air as they flew through the gloomy forest.

At last the furious driver relaxed his speed and drew up the panting horses.

'Shame, shame!' now ejaculated the tall and the short stranger as with one breath, while the latter added:

'So to betray a young lady, a beautiful young lady, and after she had concealed her money so cleverly that no robber on earth could ever have found it!'

Hugo Weyprecht was apparently a very hardened ruffian indeed, for he betrayed absolutely no sign of remorse or embarrassment; rather his face assumed a shade of extra *hauteur* as he said, shrugging his shoulders:

'Everyone must shift for himself in such cases, and charity begins at home. I have done nothing illegal; if the robbers had not got money they might have used violence.' Then, turning to the Jew beside him, he added, 'Get down; I can dispense with your further services, and shall drive myself.'

The Jew after a feeble resistance obeyed, but not without much plaintive wailing. 'And how should poor old Isaac find his

way home with his broken bones at this hour of day? And who would ever restore to him his precious sledge and his valuable horses, which were all he had to live upon?’

‘The sledge and horses will be deposited with the town authorities,’ explained Hugo, ‘where you can fetch them tomorrow. As to you, sir,’ he continued, turning to the tall red-nosed stranger, ‘be likewise good enough to relieve us of your company.’

‘May I ask by what right?’ said the man, beginning to bluster. ‘I have paid my place in the sledge as well as you.’

‘Very well,’ said Hugo unmoved, ‘you may remain if you are prepared to accompany me to the police office the moment we reach K——.’

The man looked crestfallen, and muttering imprecations he began to get out.

‘I thought so,’ said Hugo grimly. His eye now rested for a moment on the fur-clad man, with an expression of doubt.

‘Perhaps the noble gentleman would be glad to get rid of me as well?’ he said with a sneer. ‘It would be pleasanter to drive all alone with the beautiful young lady whom you have just robbed, would it not? Sorry I cannot oblige you, and I am not to be scared away by the threat of the police office. Why should I be? My passport is all in order; here it is at your service. Gregor Dimitroff, *commis voyageur*, travelling to K——, with specimens of plated watch-chains.’

‘You can remain,’ said Hugo with a frown; then turning to Clara, in the same commanding tone of voice, ‘Take this handkerchief and tie it about your head. You will catch cold with your head uncovered.’

Mechanically she obeyed him, far too much terrified to resist this terrible man, who somehow compelled obedience by the mere sound of his voice.

In a minute the sledge, lightened of two occupants, was speeding on again, and only when emerging from the forest shades on to an open space, with the lights of the town shining before him, did Hugo somewhat slacken the pace.

Not a word more had been exchanged between the three inmates of the sledge when they drew up in the courtyard of a large hotel in the suburbs of the town.

Hugo now sprang from the box with a long-drawn sigh of relief, and eagerly held out his hand to assist Clara in getting out, but affecting not to see his movement, she stepped out

at the opposite side and hurried past him without vouchsafing one glance.

Her limbs were cramped from the long sitting posture, so that was perhaps the reason why she twice stumbled on entering the broad lighted corridor. Clara frowned a little and shook her head as though impatient of her own weakness. She would walk quite straight and quietly till she reached a room, she told herself, and then she would sit down for a little. Her head was whirling so strangely, and large fiery globes seemed to be dancing before her eyes; but he must not be allowed to guess how her knees were shaking, and she tightly closed her mouth to prevent her teeth from chattering against each other. Oh yes! she could walk upstairs, she answered to an obsequious waiter who approached her with a question. No help, thank you; she felt quite strong, and then Clara clutched at the banister and fell senseless in a fainting fit.

VII.

WHEN Clara recovered consciousness she was lying in bed in a strange room, and a good-natured chambermaid was standing over her

‘Thank Heaven, my dear young lady, that you are coming to again,’ she said in German. Then, as Clara sat up in bed wildly, and clutched her hand with a scared expression, ‘Do not be afraid, you are quite safe. This is the hotel, and I am the chambermaid. I was once in service with a German lady.’

‘Are there no robbers?’ repeated Clara.

‘None, none, my dear; the gentleman told me what a fright you have had. No wonder it has upset you. And the poor gentleman, your brother, I am thinking, has been in such a dreadful way ever since. I promised to let him know as soon as you opened your eyes.’ And she rose to go to the door, but again Clara clutched hold of her hand with an expression of positive terror.

‘No, no! not that,’ she gasped. ‘He must not come, promise me that he shall not come! I can never see him again, never, never! It would kill me.’

‘Very well, my dear,’ said the chambermaid, who felt rather puzzled, and was of opinion that the pretty young lady must be just a little off her head with fatigue and terror. ‘Just as you

please ; no one shall come in here to-night, and to-morrow when you have slept you will be all right again.'

'What o'clock is it?' asked Clara.

'Nearly ten o'clock.'

'And how long have I been here?'

'More than two hours. You fell down fainting on the staircase, and the gentleman lifted you up and carried you in here.'

'He carried me?' said Clara, turning scarlet. 'How could he? Why did you let him? But he must not come, he must not come!' she repeated, with a return of her former excitement.

By degrees Clara suffered herself to be pacified and persuaded into swallowing a little food, after which she relapsed into a deep dreamless slumber, from which she only awakened late on the following morning.

Her first inquiry was about Hugo, and she was much relieved to hear that he had gone out very early and would not be back until after mid-day. He must not find her here when he returned; she was determined that he should have no clue by which to find her again; so, taking her two little gold earrings out of her ears, the only thing of value she had remaining, Clara left them on the table with a pencil note to say that she gave them to cover the expense of her food and bed. Then, at a moment when she found herself unobserved, she slipped down the staircase and out into the street.

She had while dressing rapidly reviewed her position, and resolved to seek an engagement as governess or companion in this place. She must do something to keep herself from starving, for here she was actually without a farthing in the wide world, hundreds of miles away from her own country, without a friend in this large strange city.

The town itself was not of colossal size, though it appeared so to her eyes. Preparations for one of those large annual fairs, which transform some Russian and Polish provincial towns into the semblance of a bustling capital during the week or fortnight of its duration, were filling the streets of K—— with strangers of all ranks and descriptions, and lending a fictitious animation to the usually quiet place; consequently Clara's exit from the hotel passed unnoticed, and she was quickly swallowed up in the stream of life around.

In broken Russian she contrived to ask her way to two different offices where a register was kept of servants' situations, but in the first of these she had been desired to come back in a

fortnight, and in the second one, requested to deposit a fee for inscribing her name on the list of governesses or companions seeking places.

Most people regarded her with suspicion, as the peculiar sight of a young lady elegantly attired in fur-trimmed jacket, but wearing no hat, attracted attention. Many turned round in the street to look at her, and more than one tried to accost her with insolent freedom.

As Clara walked along she now and then glanced nervously over her shoulder to make sure that the dreaded figure of her faithless lover was nowhere in sight, but these fears were groundless, for strange faces only met her on every side. After wandering about in a fruitless fashion for several hours she was utterly worn out and disheartened, not having even found a place where she could sit down to rest.

She peeped in through the plate-glass window of a large draper's shop filled with bustling customers and obsequious shopmen. One of the latter looked at her with a familiar leer which sent the blood to her cheeks, and caused her to move quickly on.

The next house was a handsome palatial residence, in front of which stood a swelling porter in splendid green and gold livery, leaning on his staff of office. Clara stood still for a moment, and her lips formed a trembling question as to whether she might not come in and sit down for a little.

The great man had apparently not understood, for after favouring her with a very supercilious stare he gave utterance to the monosyllabic question :

‘What?’

The young girl repeated her words more audibly, which had the effect of causing the magnificent individual to regard her a little more closely, before unclosing his lips to a second equally laconic question :

‘Why?’

‘Because I am tired,’ would have been the natural answer, but the porter's face looked so very far from encouraging that Clara attempted no reply, but with a sigh of disappointment turned away.

Was there really no place in this large roomy town where a weary girl could rest? Not a chair, not a bench where she had the right to sit down for ten minutes? Yes, surely in every town, in every country there is one house ever open to the home-

less and the wanderer—the house of Him who has said, ‘Come unto Me all ye who are weary, and I will give you rest;’ and Clara, having espied the Byzantine portico of a Russian Greek church in a side street, bent her steps hither with a feeling of something like relief.

The church door, as usual in those parts, was the rendezvous for a gregarious assemblage of beggars, who, grouped upon the steps in attitudes more or less picturesque, endeavoured to show off their several infirmities to the best possible advantage.

Clara turned away shuddering from the open sores on a boy’s arm, only to meet the bloodshot and horribly inflamed orbs of a white-bearded man fixed imploringly upon her.

‘A kopek, my pretty lady, only a kopek, for the love of God; I am dying of hunger,’ now moaned a whining voice in her ear, and turning she perceived the ghastly and emaciated face of a girl scarcely older than herself, evidently far gone in consumption.

All at once Clara seemed to understand that there were more wretched people than herself in the world, deeper depths of poverty than what she had ever dreamt of, and instinctively she put her hand in the pocket.

Half a dozen pair of arms were held out towards her, and half a dozen faces turned expectantly in her direction, but the hand came out of the pocket empty.

‘I have nothing,’ she exclaimed, remembering with a shock her own state of destitution, and realising that she was quite unable to confer anything on these poor wretches.

‘Nothing,’ she repeated sadly, ‘at least nothing but this,’ and dropping her grey fur muff into the hand of the pale young girl, Clara entered the church.

The interior of this place of worship was like all Greek churches, by means of pillars and arches divided off into the different sections respectively reserved for the priest, the male and the female portion of the congregation. It was in this latter outside division that Clara took her place, sinking down exhaustedly on to the first bench which came in her way.

The narrow grated windows let in but a dim and mysterious twilight, so that coming from the open daylight Clara was at first hardly able to distinguish the objects around; but by degrees, her eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, numerous forms and figures seemed to start up out of the obscurity around. Grinning, threatening devils were lurking in every corner, and quaint By-

zantine saints, with pale golden aureole and shadowy palm-branches, smiled serenely upon her from out each vaulted niche.

At another time Clara might have cared to walk round the building and examine the curious fresco paintings, by means of which the Greek Oriental Church endeavours to make intelligible to illiterate humanity the rewards and punishments of a future state. Just now, however, she was too weary, too foot- and heart-sore to have other thought but one of thankfulness for the sense of reprieve and peace which began to steal in upon her. By-and-by she would have to go out again into the noisy, bustling street, but not until she had rested and gathered strength to battle anew with the world, and meanwhile she was here quite safe and secure.

The church was deserted, for the hour of service was past, and only a faint odour of incense hung about the atmosphere.

Clara leant back luxuriously against the hard, wooden bench, and thought she had never been seated so softly in her life. With lazy enjoyment her eye rested on a picture on the piece of wall just opposite to her. It represented a pale-faced, long-limbed saint, holding a fat woolly lamb in his arms; and as she sat here, plunged in a sort of day-dream, this image got somehow entwined with her thoughts.

She had a great deal to think over, for this was the first quiet moment she had enjoyed since starting on her journey, and so much had happened within the last week that no wonder she felt a little dazed, and found it difficult to obtain a clear view of the situation. The death of her little pupil, her sudden dismissal from Count Froloff's family, the meeting with Hugo Weyprecht, and the rapid growth of their intimacy up to the moment of his unexpected treachery—all these she thought over in turn, dwelling principally on the last most painful point. How could she have been so deceived in him? and yet how impossible not to be deceived. He had looked so upright, so honest, so trustworthy! How could falsehood look so like truth? treachery so like honesty? She had trusted him so implicitly, and why? as she now asked herself. 'For no logical reason' at all she recognised, merely because he had a pair of steady-looking brown eyes and a grave thoughtful smile. After all she knew nothing of this man to whom she had been ready to surrender her heart; and passing over in review every word of his, she wondered that it had never struck her before how very reticent he had been about himself and his business. She had talked and he had listened, but had given little or no information about himself beyond mentioning

that he was a native of Hamburg and had been living some years in Russia; but where, or in what capacity, he had failed to say. They had discussed Schiller and Goethe, Beethoven and Mozart, Canova and Thorwaldsen together, and on each of these subjects he had shown himself to be well-informed and intelligent, but she had been unable to form a conjecture as to the particular branch of science, trade, or art, to which he himself belonged. She saw it all now clearly, and only marvelled how she could have been so blind before. Was not this abnormal reticence about himself proof positive of his guilty intentions? In her tardy clear-sightedness it seemed to Clara that no explanation was too monstrous of the part Hugo Weyprecht had played towards her; perhaps he himself was in league with the brigands, and had all along intended to rob her of her earnings! That he had admired her was evident, but he had no doubt merely sought to enliven the monotony of a tiresome journey by a passing flirtation, and had thrown her over without compunction at the first necessity.

Some women might have thought of applying to justice, and endeavouring to recover the lost property by bringing an action against the man who had caused the loss, but such a course did not even occur to Clara. Her only wish was never to meet him again, and, if possible, forget him.

As soon as she had rested sufficiently she would resume her task of service seeking. She must find some engagement before nightfall if she did not wish to beg her bread in the street. But she was not yet rested enough by any means, and must sit here a little longer. She felt so comfortable, so safe in this secluded sanctuary, with its incense-scented atmosphere, and that pale-faced saint with the great calm eyes keeping watch over her. By-and-by her weary eyes began to close, and Clara had fallen asleep in the corner of the church bench.

VIII.

CLARA had slept for more than an hour, and the short winter day began to close in around her. Out there in the street it was still light, but it was very dark within the church, and the figures on the wall could scarcely be distinguished. Still she slept on, and was dreaming of the dreary pine-forest when a voice struck in upon her ear.

‘Clara, Clara!’ it said.

With an effort she raised her heavy lids still drunk with sleep; then, vaguely remembering where she was, closed them again. This was the church, she recollected, and that was the picture opposite.

'Clara!' repeated the voice, louder this time.

She opened her eyes again, not yet realising who was speaking to her. There stood the saint in front of her with the woolly lamb in his arms, but his eyes looked deeper and fiercer now, and he seemed to have stepped out of his niche and to be coming quite close up to her.

'Clara!' it said a third time, and then she started to her feet with a cry of dismay, fully awakened at last.

No Byzantine saint this, pale and shadowy, that stood before her; but a man of flesh and blood, with deep impassioned eyes, holding a grey fur muff in his hand.

'Have you come here to persecute me?' she cried wildly. 'Could you not have left me here in peace?'

'Clara!' said Hugo, taking hold of her hand, 'I do not understand you. You must hear me, you must let me explain.'

'Never,' she replied shuddering. 'There is nothing to explain. If you have any pity go away, and never let me see you again.'

'I shall go,' said Hugo, turning rather pale and dropping her hand, 'but not till I have spoken. I have a right to be heard.'

'What do you want? Why have you come in here?' she said faintly.

'First of all, in order to give you back your muff,' he said, laying it down on the bench beside her. 'Your cap, unfortunately, it is not in my power to restore. Secondly, to pay my debt.'

He drew out a large pocket-book filled with Russian bank-notes. 'Seven hundred roubles, was it not, of which you were robbed? Here they are.'

Clara now looked at him almost as stupidly as she had looked at the moment of the robbery.

'I do not understand,' she stammered. 'Then why did you—why?'

'Why did I betray you to the robbers? Why did I suffer your savings thus ruthlessly to be seized upon? That was quite simple. I merely sacrificed a small sum to save a large one, and used your money as a decoy in order to detract attention from myself. I had been entrusted with 800,000 roubles from the head of my firm for carrying through an important negotiation.

Had I been searched the sum must inevitably have been found upon me and lost, and my future compromised. I had no time to apprise you of my intention, the danger was too great, and a word might have betrayed me. Besides, I had fancied—I hoped—that you understood me well enough to have trusted me. Is it possible that you should have judged me wrong, and that it was from me you tried to hide yourself?’

Clara covered her face with both hands.

‘Oh, what a fool I have been! I see it all now,’ she stammered. Then raising her head, ‘But how did you find me here? I thought that in here I should be quite safe from detection.’

‘You could not hide from me, my darling. My eyes would have found you out wherever you were; but it was this blessed little grey fur muff which led me to your hiding-place. For over two hours I had been running about the streets looking for you, when in passing this church door I espied your muff in the hand of a beggar-girl. Blessed, blessed, blessed little muff!’ exclaimed Hugo, snatching it up again and pressing his lips upon it with passionate rapture. ‘And now, Clara, now, am I to go away?’

Half an hour later the young couple came out of the church where they had plighted their troth under the eyes of that quaint Byzantine saint. Pausing at the threshold they were surrounded by the clamorous begging of the mendicants assembled in the portico, and as over-great happiness ever makes the heart softly disposed towards all fellow creatures, it was with a free and lavish hand that Hugo Weyprecht threw his *largesse* amongst the crowd. Then, taking Clara’s arm within his own, they passed out together into the busy street, followed by the blessings of the lame, the maimed, and the blind.

E. GERARD.

Of Human Incapacity.

ONLY those who have done some piece of intellectual work to be judged by many, officially entitled to sit in judgment upon it but in no way qualified, know the full depths of human stupidity even in fairly-educated folk. And those who have had that sorrowful experience have seen such depths of human stupidity as would *à priori* have been thought incredible.

The most frightful exhibitions of stupidity occur when men, not by any means stupid or illiterate, are called to judge of work which lies quite outside their experience and capacity. Likewise when men, of fair general information, try to pass themselves off as possessing knowledge which they do not possess. It was not a blockhead, but a man of moderate learning and of very great smartness (and self-sufficiency), who seriously declared that he had never read either Shakespeare or Milton; and furthermore that he did not believe that anybody had ever read either Shakespeare or Milton. Having looked into *Hamlet* one evening, and found that he was not interested, he concluded that he was a fair specimen of educated humanity, and that what did not interest him could not interest anybody.

Many men, fairly literate, have a rough impression that all intellectual work belongs so much to the same order, that if they can with a good result apply their understanding to one portion of it, they may without absurdity apply their understanding to any portion of it. This is a curious illusion. A decent graduate of a Scotch University, who has studied for the Kirk, and done the duty of a parish for ten years, would never dream that he was therefore qualified to judge of the technicalities of Music, or of Architecture, or of Engineering, or of Golf. In such matters he would bow to the judgment of experts. I have indeed heard of a good Professor of Divinity who instructed Sir Gilbert Scott, near the end of his career, in the high principles of Architecture: the Professor stating that he had evolved these from his inner con-

sciousness in the light of the Divine. But after he had spoken at much length, Sir Gilbert Scott smiled kindly, and departed without even a syllable of reply. That Professor was indeed an exceptional man. Men, not exceptional at all, will however be found to express an authoritative opinion upon Liturgies, upon Hymnology, upon Ritual, never having bestowed the smallest thought upon these: and that without any idea that this is presumptuous; that, too, though they are clever and sensible men. One puts aside such judgments as that of the youth whom Dean Hook (a youth too) challenged to mortal combat for declaring that *Shakespeare was a humbug*: also of the undergraduate who told the writer that *In Memoriam* was rubbish, and Tennyson a fool. For these were the judgments of self-sufficient blockheads. I am not concerned with such. I am speaking of men of good ability and culture, of eminent ability and culture, who fancy themselves qualified to express a judgment on subjects from which, by nature and training, they are separated by a great gulf. One has known good and distinguished men who, being appealed to on such a subject, have at once replied, *I am not competent to express an opinion on that question*. But such men were high above the decent average Philistine I see at this moment in my mind's eye. I was present when a young woman suddenly turned to a venerable Bishop of the Anglican Church, Senior Classic in his youth, and in his age the most learned prelate of his day, and uttered the strange inquiry, *What does your lordship think of Sarah Bernhardt?* The Bishop smiled benignantly upon his questioner, but put the question by with a tact acquired by long experience. I have known men who knew just as much about Sarah Bernhardt as Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln, who would have fenced with the question, fished about for a little, got a scrap or two of information, and then delivered an authoritative judgment. Such was the good man who overheard certain others (who did not know much more than himself) discussing the merits and the authorship of a not-unfamiliar hymn, which begins with the words *Rock of Ages*. He had never heard of it before. And he caught the author's name imperfectly. But he joined in the talk with an air of information, and with the unlucky words *Yes, that is a fine hymn of Tillibody's*.

Long ago, I knew some little of the preparation of a volume of Prayers which, after being put in proof, had to be submitted to a Committee of educated men, most of whom knew nothing whatsoever of liturgical propriety or expression. I blame them not: they never had a chance of knowing anything of these. Let me

inform the Scottish reader of this page that the volume in question was not the *Book of Common Order* of the Church Service Society. By the time *that* volume was floated, the *quasi*-liturgical revival had flooded the land; and every man who had part in the preparation of the beautiful and devout book was, in knowledge and in taste, in some measure an expert. Things have mended marvellously, north of the Tweed, since the days when I saw good Doctor Crawford sit down anxiously, day after day, at the head of a long and uninviting table, and submit his carefully and gracefully compiled proofs to the criticism of a dozen men, most of them absolutely incompetent, two or three of them coarse souls who enjoyed torturing the *Convener* by attempts at reviewing which no halfpenny paper in the land would have published. I was a youth then. I remember how, as hour after hour went over in the most captious and carping verbal disputes, I used to look out of the window at the leafless trees of the great Gardens, and wonder how any mortal could undertake such thankless work as Crawford had undertaken. Sometimes the criticism took the form of an Old Bailey cross-examination. I did not quite understand, then, that when a man takes up a work, even a most unselfish work, he does not like to be beaten, especially by human creatures whom he despises. Nor did I know that the time would come wherein, for a good end, I should myself have to go through a good deal worse. But three or four of us were steadfast, in spite of every form of discouragement, misrepresentation, and abuse; and, after years of all these, we succeeded. Then, when our work proved a success, a success which (all facts considered) may be called stupendous: we had our humble reward.

I put away from me, quite resolutely, various memories: I shall not write in ill-nature. Let me recall, in an amiable spirit, a single typical criticism. It can aggrieve nobody now. A gracefully-composed collect, by Crawford himself (he was a man in intelligence and culture thirty years before his day, but timid in expressing his opinions at a time when distinct and vicious persecution was aimed at those who were called *Innovators*), ended with the familiar and melodious formula *Who hath taught and commanded us thus to pray*. An English reader will hardly believe that a man belonging to the educated class vehemently protested against this, which he had evidently never seen nor heard before. He insisted that the sentence was unintelligible; and that it ought to run, *Who hath taught and commanded us to pray thus*: otherwise people would not know that it referred

to the Lord's Prayer which was to follow. He stuck to his opinion with the obstinacy of dense ignorance and stupidity: and a loud and lengthy debate followed. I sat in silence, and thought of a remarkable incident at which I was present, elsewhere. It was a large dinner-party, on a public occasion. The entertainment was given by an Earl, deservedly popular. It was extremely handsome, and champagne flowed in almost excessive flood. The evening was well advanced, when a benignant old gentleman arose to propose a toast. He spoke with entire fluency: but somehow he said exactly the opposite of what he meant. 'I feel,' said he, 'that for a plain country squire like myself to address this learned company, is indeed to cast pearls before swine.' Never was so successful a speech made. He could get no farther for many minutes. The swine applauded vociferously, and as though they would never cease. We knew, of course, that the good old gentleman meant that he was the swine and that we were the pearls. But then he had not said so. His meaning could be gathered, but was not expressed. But graceful collects, submitted to men who declared that the word *hearty* was applicable to a dinner, but that no mortal had ever heard of giving *hearty thanks*: who maintained that to say *O Lord Jesu Christ* was Popish: who (one of them certainly) could utter the petition *God save the Queen: May she have a happy Christmas*: and who never heard in their lives of the mysterious formula *Thus to pray*: are of a surety in the evil case at which the old Perthshire laird was aiming. As for the mortal whose ear could suffer him to utter such a phrase as *To pray thus*, one can but say that he might, for his discernment of the music of English prose, have been one of that majority in the Revision Committee who sent forth the magnificent Version of the N. T. which the English-speaking world knows, smeared and disfigured in a fashion which (to many) is not irritating but infuriating.

I have said that the most wonderful manifestations of human incapacity do not come from incapable men, but from capable men, tackling matters to which their capacity extends not. It was a distinctly clever man to whom, in my boyhood, I read *The Ancient Mariner*: and who listened to the end, and then merely said that Coleridge was a horrible fool. I know, now, that it is enough to infuriate anybody to persist in reading a long poem to him. But, in that case, the famous *Rime* was heard with an amiable patience: and then judgment was given. When I sought to argue against it, I was told I had better not say I admired *The*

Ancient Mariner, or I should be thought fit for Bedlam. Then, nobody could maintain that old Lord Eldon was a fool. He was a humbug, no doubt: it must have been queer to see him blubbing on the judgment-seat, and talking about his conscience and his approaching death. But he was a great lawyer. Of that one cannot judge. But we can all judge of his Biblical Criticism; likewise of his common-sense, when being Attorney-General he produced the N. T., and read a few verses from Revelation, and argued that Napoleon was either a Horn or a Frog: it matters not which. How the Commons stood it is hard to understand. Mr. Bright, with magnificent effect, has often quoted scripture in that House: but John Scott's proceeding was quite different. And we can all judge of the Chancellor's Poetry. He did not write much: but he wrote quite enough to enable us to take his measure. Here is his comic poem with regard to a Judge of that day, a Scotchman, Mr. Justice Allan Park.

James Allan Park
Came naked stark,
From Scotland:
But he got clothes,
Like other beaux,
In England.

I do not know what sort of a Chancellor Mr. Andrew Lang would make: save that I have a firm conviction that whatever he undertook to do, he would do admirably well. But there can be little question that, as a writer of sparkling verse, Lord Eldon can hardly be placed upon the same level with the brilliant Borderer. Indeed, had we known no more of Lord Eldon than that poem, we should have esteemed him as little better than a fool. But even so did Pitt hold up his hands in consternation, after a talk with Wolfe, the hero of Quebec. Even so did a Secretary of State declare that Nelson was the greatest fool he ever talked with. You must take a man upon his proper ground; you must measure his strength where his strength lies. The Duke of Wellington was not an impulsive soul, who could get up from the dinner-table, draw his sword, and swagger about the room boasting that he was to surpass all the soldiers of antiquity, as Wolfe did in Pitt's presence. We wonder not that the minister held up his hands on Wolfe's departure, with words to the effect, *Must we trust our army to that idiot?* Yet the great Duke, long after Waterloo, paid a large sum to get back a letter written by him on the evening of the battle,

which letter he instantly burnt, saying that when he wrote it he was the greatest ass in Europe. I fancy that, had we seen the letter, we should in so far have agreed with the great but by no means exemplary Duke. There is the streak of the fool in the wisest of men. It was very apparent in Solomon. There is the streak of incapacity in the most capable man. And it grows most conspicuous when he strays beyond his proper measure. What more graceful than a swan in the water? What more awkward than the swan waddling on shore?

There is no special pleasure, to the well-regulated mind, in seeing swans on shore, in seeing General Wolfe rushing about a dining-room with his sword drawn, gibbering. That was not General Wolfe: he was *not himself*. So was it, even so, when a shrewd lawyer wrote to a man charged with the preparation of a Hymnal, objecting to the name. A *Hymnal*, he said, meant a *Hymn-all*: to wit, a collection of *All Hymns*; and as the volume would not contain *All Hymns*, but merely a selection, the title was misleading. The individual charged with the Hymnal did indeed, in the solitude of his study, utter a cry of *Idiot*. But, as he uttered that anguished cry, he sat down and wrote a civil letter to his correspondent, explaining what a Hymnal meant. The explanation shall not be repeated on this page. Nearly as judicious was another correspondent, who wrote objecting to the first line of a familiar piece, which begins, *Crown Him with many crowns*. The line, said this capable critic, must for rhythm's sake be changed to *Him crown with many crowns*. Another critic put the difficult question, *Who was* to 'crown Him with many crowns'? It was a man of real ability and learning, but wholly ignorant of Hymnology, and of all versification, who was suddenly called upon to sit in judgment on a proposed collection of Hymns; and who wrote out, at length, his objection to Richard Baxter's fine verse:

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before:
He that unto God's kingdom comes,
Must enter by this door.

It is strange that in the presence of these grand words, any mortal should have heart to write out that the verse would not do: inasmuch as to make it rhyme, you must read the third line, 'He that unto God's kingdom *cooms*.' Yet the writer's eyes beheld that criticism, and a great many more of which this is a fair sample. The good man had never heard of half-rhymes, permitted

by common consent, as *move with love*, and the like. There is a verse more famous than Baxter's, which I am quite sure that good man never saw :

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood.

Had he seen it, his first remark would doubtless have been that the doctrine was most unsound, and that any Scotch parson who ventured to cherish such a trust ought to be deposed and deprived of his living. But the second remark, given out with equal assurance, would have been that the verse is not poetry at all; forasmuch as in reading it you would need to say, 'Oh yet we trust that somehow *gudd*.'

Not so many people as ought to know it know Mr. Baring Gould's beautiful hymn *Daily, daily sing the praises Of the city God hath made*: a hymn which is charming both in its words and its music. I have heard one of its verses condemned (by a man who had never seen it before) on the ground that the verse declared that the angels *sat upon their harps* while playing upon them: an arrangement which he very justly said was impracticable. Here is the verse thus criticised. It is the river of life which is spoken of:

Where it waters leafy Eden,
Rolling over silver sands,
Sit the angels softly chiming,
On the harps between their hands.

It was pointed out to the critic that the verse describes the angels as chiming upon their harps, not as sitting upon them. And it is just to say that the critic accepted the present writer's assurance that the case was so. But the critic, so far from being a simpleton, was astute to such a degree that I have heard his friends apply to him the adjective *leary*. This is the adjective which George Borrow tells us was applied to him on the occasion of his selling a horse to a horse-dealer for more than the horse was worth: an incident which implies in the seller a sharpness almost supernatural.

Is it worth while to record that I have heard a man, fairly informed in his own field, loudly and persistently maintain that such a fashion as putting an anapest for an iambus is unknown in English verse? He did not indeed use the words; for I do not

think he knew what either an iambus or an anapest means. But he made his meaning clear. Let young lady readers be told that an iambus, in verse, is a foot consisting of a short syllable followed by a long: an anapest is two short syllables followed by a long. And now to test that extraordinary assertion. Milton has:

Fled and pursued transverse the re|sōnānt fūgue|.

Tennyson has:

The vi|ōlēt cōmes|, but we are gone.
When Laz|ārūs lēft | his charnel cave.
Who ush|ērēt in | the dol|ōrōus hōur|.
That each, who seems a sep|ārāte whōle|.

Would you say *vi'let*, *Laz'rus*, *sep'rate*, *dol'rous*? But, indeed, the thing is too plain for discussion. For long after I heard that incompetent critic, I marked how all the poetry I read swarmed with the case which he declared was utterly unknown in decently accurate versification. Think of Wordsworth:

A fresh|ēnīng lūst|re mellow.
With hair of glitt|ēring grāy|.
How oft, a vig|ōrōus mān|, I lay.

The critic, I must say, was good-natured. When the discussion was over, he said to the writer, 'I know you think I am a blockhead.' I cordially assented, so far as versification is concerned. But though precisely what he called himself *secundum hoc*, as the logicians say, he was very far from being a blockhead *simpliciter*. He lived in Ethiopia, in the sixteenth century.

A. K. H. B.

A Prison Song.

THE breath of spring is in the air,
 The sunlit morning sky
 Shines on the pavements lying bare
 Between the houses high,
 And sudden in the quiet street
 A prison'd lark sings clear and sweet.

Each note of his fresh music yields
 A thousand memories
 Of summer 'midst the golden fields
 And by the silver seas;
 Winged with the magic of his lay,
 My memory bears me far away.

Again, again I see afar,
 Above my Northern isles,
 Like a great tear one lingering star
 Shine through the dawn-god's smiles,
 And as his last pale beam is gone
 A lark hangs singing where he shone.

Wreathed with a gleaming, shimmering mist
 I see the blue hills dream,
 I see the swaying iris kissed
 By the swift-flowing stream,
 While low beside the water's edge
 A wren slips chattering through the sedge.

Brushing the bending reeds apart
 I hear a wild duck go,
 Like swarthy water-spirits dart
 Her ducklings to and fro,
 And shrill among the rustling grass
 The shrew-mice greet me as they pass.

A PRISON SONG.

The song is hushed a little space,
And at its pause is gone
The spell that made a fairy place
Of this grey stretch of stone ;
Then bursting forth afresh, the strain
Bears all my heart away again.

The sunset's gold has flushed the sky,
And reaching far away
I see the long green links that lie
Above the gleaming bay :
On the wide waters, desolate,
A seagull calls his absent mate.

Sweet thyme and crowfoot meet the sand
As if the waves had rolled
Their fleeting glories on the land
In purple and in gold ;
The soft west wind that bends to kiss
Their beauty, faints in fragrant bliss.

From quiet inland valleys rise
Wild bird-notes, faint and low ;
A heron down the eastern skies
Wings heavily and slow,
Like a strange dusky herald sent
From the grey cloud's long battlement.

And still by mountain, stream and sea,
The sunlit air is sweet
With that same happy melody
Which rings adown the street,
Till all the voices of the spring
Within my heart awake and sing.

D. J. ROBERTSON.

Chanticleer.

DURING the month of September I spent several days at a house standing on high ground in one of the pleasantest suburbs of London, commanding a fine view at the back of the breezy, wooded, and not very far-off Surrey hills; and all round, from every window, front and back, such a mass of greenery met the eye, almost concealing the neighbouring houses, that I could easily imagine myself far out in the country. In the garden the omnipresent sparrow, and that always pleasant companion the starling, associated with the thrush, blackbird, green linnet, chaffinch, redstart, wren, and two species of tits; and, better than all these, not fewer than half-a-dozen robins warbled their autumn notes from early morning until late in the evening. Domestic bird-life was also represented by fifteen fowls, and the wise laxity existing in the establishment made these also free of the grounds; for of all eyesores and painful skeletons in London cupboards the worst, to my mind, is that unwholesome coop at the back where a dozen unhappy birds are usually to be found immured for life. These, more fortunate, had ample room to run about in, and countless broad shady leaves from which to pick the green caterpillar, and red tortoise-shaped lady-bird, and parti-coloured fly, and soft warm soil in which to bathe in their own gallinaceous fashion, and to lie with outstretched wings luxuriating by the hour in the genial sunshine. And having seen their free wholesome life I did not regard the new-laid egg on the breakfast table with a feeling of repugnance, but ate it with a relish.

I have said that the fowls numbered fifteen; five were old birds, and ten were chickens, closely alike in size, colour, and general appearance. They were not the true offspring of the hen that reared them, but hatched from eggs bought from a local poultry-breeder. As they advanced in age to their *teens*, or the period in chicken-life corresponding to that in which, in the human species, boy and girl begin to diverge, their tails grew long,

and they developed very fine red combs; but the lady of the house, who had been promised good *layers* when she bought the eggs, clung tenaciously to the belief that long arching tails and stately crests were ornaments common to both sexes in this particular breed. By-and-by they commenced to crow, first one, then two, then all, and stood confessed cockerels. Incidents like this, which are of frequent occurrence, serve to keep alive the exceedingly ancient notion that the sex of the future chick can be foretold from the shape of the egg. As I had no personal interest in the question of the future egg-supply of the establishment, I was not sorry to see the chickens develop into cocks; what did interest me were their first attempts at crowing—those grating sounds which the young bird does not seem to emit, but to wrench out with painful effort like a plant, and not without bringing away portions of the lungs clinging to its roots. The bird seems to know what is coming, like a dentist about to extract one of his own double-pronged eye-teeth, and setting his feet firmly on the ground, and throwing himself well back before an imaginary looking-glass, and with arched-neck, wide-open beak, and rolling eyes, courageously performs the horrible operation. One cannot help thinking that a cockerel brought up without any companions of his own sex and age would not often crow, but in this instance there were no fewer than ten of them to encourage each other in the laborious process of tuning their harsh throats. Heard subsequently in the quiet of the early morning, these first tuning efforts suggested some reflections to my mind, which may not prove entirely without interest to fanciers who aim at something beyond a mere increase in our food supply in their selecting and refining processes.

To continue my narration. I woke in the morning at my usual time, between three and four o'clock, which is not my getting-up time, for, as a rule, after half an hour or so I sleep again. The waking is not voluntary as far as I know; for although it may seem a contradiction in terms to speak of coming at will out of a state of unconsciousness, we do, in cases innumerable, wake voluntarily, or at the desired time, not perhaps being altogether unconscious when sleeping. If, however, this early waking were voluntary, I should probably say that it was for the pleasure of listening to the crowing of the cocks at that silent hour when the night, so near its end, is darkest, and the mysterious tide of life, prescient of coming dawn, has already turned, and is sending the red current more and more swiftly through the sleeper's veins. I

have spent many a night in the desert, and when waking on the wide silent grassy plain, the first whiteness in the eastern sky, and the fluting call of the tinamou, and the perfume of the wild evening primrose, have seemed to me like a resurrection in which I had a part; and something of this feeling is always associated in my mind with the first far-heard notes of Chanticleer.

It was very dark and quiet when I woke; my window was open, with only a lace curtain before it to separate me from the open air. Presently the profound silence was broken. From a distance of fifty or sixty yards away on the left hand came the crow of a cock, soon answered by another further away on the same side, and then, further away still, by a third. Other voices took up the challenge on the right, some near, some far, until it seemed that there was scarcely a house in the neighbourhood at which Chanticleer was not a dweller. There was no other sound. Not for another hour would the sparrows burst out in a chorus of chirruping notes, lengthened or shortened at will, variously inflected, and with a ringing musical sound in some of them, which makes one wonder why this bird, so high in the scale of nature, has never acquired a set song for itself. For there is music in him, and when confined with a singing finch he will sometimes learn its song. Then the robins, then the tits, then the starlings, gurgling, jarring, clicking, whistling, chattering. Then the pigeons cooing soothingly on the roof and window-ledges, taking flight from time to time with sudden sharp flap, flap, followed by a long silken sound made by the wings in gliding. At four the cocks had it all to themselves; and without counting the cockerels (not yet out of school) I could distinctly hear a dozen birds; that is to say, they were near enough for me to listen to their music critically. The variety of sounds they emitted was very great, and, if cocks were selected for their vocal qualities, would have shown an astonishing difference in the musical tastes of their owners. A dozen dogs of as many different breeds, ranging from the boar-hound to the toy terrier, would not have shown greater dissimilarity in their forms than did these cocks in their voices. For the fowl, like the dog, has become an extremely variable creature in the domestic state, in voice no less than in size, form, colour, and other particulars. At one end of the scale there was the raucous bronchial strain produced by the unwieldy cochin. What a bird is that! Nature, in obedience to man's behests, and smiling with secret satire over her work, has made it ponderous and ungraceful as a goose. The burnished red hackles, worn like

a light mantle over the black doublet of the breast, the metallic dark green sickle-plumes arching over the tail, all the beautiful lines and rich colouring, have been absorbed into flesh and fat for gross feeders. For its colours have not been washed out, but in; and with these have gone its liveliness and vigour, its clarion voice and hostile spirit and brilliant courage; it is *Gallus bankiva* degenerate, with dulled brains and blunted spurs, and its hoarse crow is a barbarous chant.

And far away at the other end, startling in its suddenness and impetuosity, was a trisyllabic crow, so brief, piercing, and emphatic, that it could only have proceeded from that peppery uppish little bird the bantam. And of the three syllables the last, which should be the longest, was the shortest, 'short and sharp like the shrill swallow's cry,' or perhaps even more like the shrieky bark of an enraged cur; not a reveille and silvern morning song in one, as a crow should be, but a challenge and a defiance, wounding the sense like a spur, and suggesting the bustle and fury of the cockpit.

If this style of crowing was known to Milton, it is perhaps accountable for the one bad couplet in the 'Allegro:—

' While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of darkness thin.

Some one has said that every line in that incomparable poem brings at least one distinct picture vividly before the mind's eye. The picture the first line of the couplet I have quoted suggests to my mind is not of crowing Chanticleer at all, but of a stalwart, bare-armed, blowy-faced woman, vigorously beating on a tin pan with a stick; but for what purpose—whether to call down a passing swarm of bees, or to summon the chickens to be fed—I never know. It is only my mental picture of a 'lively din.' As to the second line, all attempts to see the thing described only bring before me clouds and shadows, confusedly rushing about in an impossible way; a chaos utterly unlike the serenity and imperceptible growth of morning, and not a picture at all, or if a picture, then a nocturn or symphony by Mr. Whistler.

By-and-by I found myself paying special attention to one cock, about a hundred yards away, or a little more perhaps, for by contrast all the other songs within hearing seemed strangely inferior. Its voice was singularly clear and pure, the last note greatly prolonged and with a slightly falling inflection, yet not collapsing at the finish as such long notes frequently do, ending with a little

internal sound or croak, as if the singer had exhausted his breath, but it was perfect in its way, a finished performance, artistic, and, by comparison, brilliant. After once hearing this bird I paid little attention to the others, but after each resounding call I counted the seconds until its repetition. It was this bird's note, on this morning, and not the others, which seemed to bring round me that atmosphere of dreams and fancies I exist in at early cock-crow—dreams and memories, sweet or sorrowful, of old scenes and faces, and many eloquent passages in verse and prose, written by men in other and better days, who lived more with nature than we do now. Such a note as this was, perhaps, in Thoreau's mind when he regretted that there were no cocks to cheer him in the solitude of Walden. 'I thought,' he says, 'that it might be worth while keeping a cockerel for his music merely, as a singing bird. The note of this once wild Indian pheasant is certainly the most remarkable of any bird's, and if they could be naturalised without being domesticated it would soon become the most famous sound in our woods. . . . To walk in a winter morning in a wood where these birds abounded, their native woods, and hear the wild cockerels crow on the trees, clear and shrill for miles over the surrounding country—think of it! It would put nations on the alert. Who would not be early to rise, and rise earlier and earlier on each successive morning of his life, till he became unspeakably healthy, wealthy, and wise?'

Soon I fell into thinking of one greater than Thoreau, so unlike the skyey-minded New England prophet and solitary, so much more genial and tolerant, more mundane and lovable; and yet like Thoreau in his nearness to nature. Not a lover only of generous wines, and books 'clothed in black and red,' all natural sights and sounds also 'filled his herte with pleasure and solass,' and the early crowing of the cock was a part of the minstrelsy he loved. Perhaps when lying awake during the dark quiet hours, and listening to just such a note as this, he conceived and composed that wonderful tale of the 'Nun's Priest,' in which the whole character of Chanticleer, his glory and his foibles, together with the homely virtues of Dame Partlett, are so admirably set forth.

And longer ago it was perhaps such a note as this, heard in imagination by the cock-loving Athenians, which all at once made them feel so unutterably weary of endless fighting with the Lacedæmonians, and inspired their hearts with such a passionate desire for the long untasted sweets of security and repose. Is it one of my morning fancies merely—for fact and fancy mingle

strangely at this still, mysterious hour, and are scarcely distinguishable—or is it related in history that this strange thing happened when all the people of the violet-crowned city were gathered to witness a solemn tragedy, and in which certain verses were spoken that had a strange meaning to their war-weary souls? 'Those who sleep in the morning in the arms of peace do not start from them at the sound of the trumpet, and nothing interrupts their slumbers but the peaceful crowing of the cock.' And at these words the whole concourse was electrified, and rose up like one man, and from thousands of lips went forth a great cry of 'Peace! Peace! Let us make peace with Sparta!'

Hark! once more that long clarion call: it is the last time—the very last; for all the others have sung a dozen times apiece and have gone to sleep again. So would this one have done, but cocks, like minstrels among men, are vain creatures, and some kind officious fairy whispered in his ear that there was an appreciative listener hard by, and so to please me he sang just one verse more.

Lying and listening in the dark it seemed to me that there were two opposite qualities commingled in the sound, with an effect analogous to that of shadow mingling with and chastening light at eventide. First, it was strong and clear, full of assurance and freedom, qualities admirably suited to the song of a bird of Chanticleer's disposition; a lusty, ringing strain, not sung in the clouds or from a lofty perch midway between earth and heaven, but with feet firmly planted on the soil, and earthly; and compared with the notes of the grove like a versified utterance of Walt Whitman compared with the poems of the true inspired children of song—Blake, Shelley, Poe. Earthly, but not hostile and eager; on the contrary, leisurely, *peaceful*, even dreamy, with a touch of tenderness which brings it into relationship with the more ærial tones of the true singers; and this is the second quality I spoke of, which gave a charm to this note and made it seem better than the others. This is partly the effect of distance, which clarifies and softens sound, just as distance gives indistinctness of outline and ethereal blueness to things that meet the sight. To objects beautiful in themselves, in graceful lines and harmonious proportions and colouring, the haziness imparts an additional grace; but it does not make beautiful objects which are ugly in themselves, as, for instance, an ugly square house. So, in the etherialising effect of distance on sound, when so loud a sound as the crowing of a strong-lunged cock becomes dreamy

and tender at a distance of one hundred yards, there must be good musical elements in it to begin with. I do not remark this dreaminess in the notes of the other birds, some crowing at an equal distance, others still further away. All natural music is heard best at a distance; like the chiming of bells, and the music of the flute, and the wild confused strains of the bagpipes, for among artificial sounds these come the nearest to those made by nature. The 'shrill sharps' of the thrush must be softened by distance to charm, and the skylark, when close at hand, has both sharp and harsh sounds scarcely pleasing. He must mount high before you can appreciate his merit. I do not recommend anyone to keep a caged cock in his study for the sake of its music, crow it never so well.

To return to the ten cockerels: they did not crow very much, and at first I paid little attention to them. After a few days I remarked that one individual among them was rapidly acquiring the clear vigorous strain of the adult bird. Compared with that fine note which I have described, it was still weak and shaky, but in shape it was similar, and the change had come while its brethren were still uttering brief and harsh screeches as at the beginning. Probably, where there is a great mixture of varieties, it is the same with the fowl as with man in the diversity of the young, different ancestral characters appearing in different members of the same family. This cockerel was apparently the musical member, and promised in a short time to rival his neighbour. Having heard that it was intended to keep one of the cockerels to be the parent of future broods, I began to wonder whether the prize in the lottery—to wit, life and a modest harem—would fall to this fine singer or not. The odds were that his musical career would be cut short by an early death, since the ten birds were very much alike in other respects, and I felt perfectly sure that his superior note would weigh nothing in the balance. For when has the character of the voice influenced a fancier in selecting? Never, I believe, odd as it seems. I have read a very big book on the various breeds of the fowl, but the crowing of the cock was not mentioned in it. This would not seem so strange if fanciers had invariably looked solely to utility, and their highest ambition had ended at size, weight and quality of flesh, early maturity, hardihood, and the greatest number of eggs. This has not been the case. They possess, like others, the love of the beautiful, artificial as their standards sometimes appear; and there are breeds in which beauty seems to have been the principal ob-

ject, as, for instance, in several of the gold and silver spangled and pencilled varieties. But, besides beauty of plumage, there are other things in the fowl worthy of being improved by selection. One of these has been cultivated by man for thousands of years, namely, the combative spirit and splendid courage of the male bird. But there is a spirit abroad now which condemns cock-fighting, and to continue selecting and breeding cocks solely for their game-points seems a mere futility. The energy and enthusiasm expended in this direction would be much better employed in improving the bird's vocal powers.

The morning song of the cock is a sound unique in nature, and of all natural sounds it is the most universal. 'All climates agree with brave Chanticleer. He is more indigenous even than the natives. His health is ever good; his lungs are sound; his spirits never flag.' He is a pet bird among tribes that have never seen the peacock, goose, and turkey. In tropical countries where the dog becomes dumb, or degenerates into a mere growler, his trumpet never rusts. It is true that he was cradled in the torrid zone, yet in all Western lands, where he 'shakes off the powdery snow' with vigorous wings, his voice sounds as loud and inspiring as in the hot jungle. Pale-faced Londoners, and blacks, and bronzed or painted barbarians, all men all the world over, wake at morn to the 'peaceful crowing of the cock,' just as the Athenians woke of old, and the nations older still. It is not, therefore, strange that this song has more associations for man than any other sound in nature. But, apart from any adventitious claims to our attention, the sound possesses intrinsic merit and pleases for its own sake. In our other domestic birds we have, with regard to this point, been unfortunate. We have the gobbling of turkeys, and the hoarse, monotonous *come back* of the guinea fowl, screaming of peacocks and geese, and quacking, hissing, and rasping of mallard and muscovy. Above all these sounds the ringing, lusty, triumphant call of Chanticleer, as the far-reaching toll of the bell-bird sounds above the screaming and chattering of parrots and toucans in the Brazilian forest. A fine sound, which in spite of many changes of climate and long centuries of domestication still preserves that forest-born character of wildness, which gives so great a charm to the language of many woodland gallinaceous birds. As we have seen, it is variable, and in some artificial varieties has been suffered to degenerate into sounds harsh and disagreeable; yet it is plain that an improved voice in a beautiful breed would double the bird's value from an æsthetic point of

view. As things now are, the fine voices are in a very small minority. Some bad voices in artificial breeds—*i.e.* those which, like the Brahma and Cochin, diverge most widely from the original type—are perhaps incurable, like the rook's voice; for that bird will probably always caw hoarsely in spite of the musical throat which anatomists find in it. We can only listen to our birds, and begin experimenting with those already possessed of shapely notes and voices of good quality.

I am not going to be so ill-mannered as to conclude without an apology to those among us who under no circumstances can tolerate the crowing of the cock. It is true that I have not been altogether unmindful of their prepossessions, and have freely acknowledged in divers places that Chanticleer does not always please, and that there is always room for improvement; but if they go further than that, if for them there exists not on this round globe a cock whose voice would fail to irritate, then I have not shown consideration enough, and something is still owing to their feelings, which are very acute. It is possible that one of these sensitive persons may take up the Magazine, and, attracted by the title, dip into this article, hoping to find in it a practical suggestion for the effectual muzzling of the obnoxious bird. The only improvement which would fall in with such a one's ideas on the subject of cock-crowing would be to improve this kind of natural music out of existence. Naturally the paper would disappoint him; he would be grieved at the writer's erroneous views. I hope that his feelings would take no acuter form. I have listened to a person, usually mild-mannered, denouncing a neighbour in the most unmeasured terms for the crime of keeping a crowing cock. If the cock had been a non-crower, a silent member, it would have been different: he would hardly have known that he had a neighbour. There is a very serious, even a sad, side to this question. Mr. Sully maintains that as civilisation progresses, and as we grow more intellectual, all noise, which is pleasing to children and savages, and only exhilarates their coarse and juvenile brains, becomes increasingly intolerable to us. What unfortunate creatures we then are! We have got our pretty rattle, and are now afraid that the noise it makes is going to be the death of us. But what is noise? Will any two highly intellectual beings agree as to the particular sound which produces the effect of rusty nails thrust in among the convolutions of the brain? Physicians are continually discovering new forms of nervous mala-

dies, caused by the perpetual hurry and worry and excitement of our modern life; and perhaps there is one form in which natural sounds, which being natural should be agreeable, or at any rate innocent, become more and more abhorrent. This is a question which concerns the medical journals, also, to some extent, those who labour to forecast the future. Happily, all our maladies are thrown off, sooner or later, if they do not kill us; and we can cheerfully look forward to a time when the delicate cords in us shall no longer be made to vibrate 'like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh to any sound in nature,' and when the peaceful crowing of the cock shall cease to madden the early waker. For, whatever may be the fate awaiting our city civilisation, brave Chanticleer, improved as to his voice or not, will undoubtedly still be with us.

W. H. HUDSON.

One Traveller Returns.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY AND HENRY HERMAN.

The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns.

XV.

HANUN lay pondering that night in his own house alone. His subtle mind threaded hither and thither in a maze of thought, and he was eager to find his way through his own imaginings. He had doubted everything, and the beginning of faith in him brought with it something of the shock a candid and open soul receives when suspicion is first thrust upon it. The light of the earthenware lamp flickered, and the roof of the room was alternately ruddy and invisible. He had an eye for this as he threaded his own innermost mazes, and he likened the swift flicker of his mind to it. So intermittently he saw and did not see. Then the lamp went out, and he lay in darkness, and in the same instant of time the doubts vanished and his mind seemed clothed in light. Whatever impulse of heat, or anger, or haste, or fleshly appetite, or spiritual hope had arisen within him any time this forty years he had smiled and sneered it into quiet. His infidelity had reached to the roots of his soul and the fibres of his flesh. He had doubted and derided his own passions, and that twilight devil of incertitude who blends the white of truth and the black of falsehood to one lying grey, had been his lifelong comrade. But now the broad light broke about him, clear, undazzling, and would not be derided or denied. He knew—once and for ever.

He arose and stepped into the void of night with no feeling of his recent weakness. The broad sky throbbed with stars, and the silence buzzed in his ears. He walked for a long time not noting whither his footsteps led him, until the sound of voices recalled him to himself. Then he remembered that the morrow

was the day of Hest, the Warder of the Seasons, and looking to the stars he saw that it was near midnight. A voice challenged him, and he answered 'It is I, Hanun,' and then stood still.

Thirteen of the priests of Hest, naked in the starlight, were grouped about a squared stone on which was set a globe-shaped jar of baked clay. The onlooker knew the ritual, and his eyes recognised details which the dimness would have hidden from one less familiar. He knew the great hammer of granite and its crooked haft of ash. He knew the stone of offering, and could even fancy that he traced the line of the delicate thong which two nude priests held tightly strained on high, exactly over the eastern corner and the western corner of the stone. He saw a third kneeling beneath the line with his face turned upward and his hands upon the stone.

Then the kneeling man spoke :

'The star draws near.' Then again after a pause : 'Praises to Hest that the promise is fair. The line shakes not and the skies are clear.' Then again after a pause : 'It is the hour.'

One, bent and bearded, laid both hands upon the shaft of the hammer and essayed to lift it. He failed, and having spat upon his hands essayed again and failed a second time, though he strained his old joints at the effort and quivered from head to foot.

'The day of my ministry is over,' he said, in an aged voice. 'Come hither, Uxhaemhu, that shall be keeper of the hammer. Know, Uxhaemhu, that I, Soerundeg, took the hammer from the hand of Craef, the wolf-toothed, who took it from the hand of Duwongar, slayer of the southrons, who took it from the hand of Pawr, the white-eyed, who named the names of three that had gone before him, and the name of Horw, who had it at the beginning—the great Salaekin, the sweet to the gods, the wrapped in the holy savour of tortures. Know also, that thou mayest tell it to him that followeth after thee, that it hath thus been ever for the glory of Hest, and the ripening of the fruits of the earth. That the jar shall be filled with the blood of a youth and a maid. That it shall rest on the stone that Hest set up, and be broken with the hammer that Hest gave unto Horw. That the rite hath not changed from the beginning until now, and shall not change for ever. That they who perform it shall be naked, waiting for the blessing of Hest, as were their forefathers, ere Hest had given them anything, whether of flax, or hide, or wool. These things shalt thou speak to him that follows after thee, that the

memory of them may live in the earth, and that the wrath of Hest may be appeased.'

The man who knelt at the stone watched the thong which trembled above him, tightly strung, and all awaited his word.

'The star of Hest,' he said after a pause, 'is over the stone of Hest. Strike!'

The youthful priest to whom the hammer had been entrusted swung the cumbrous implement high, and, allowing it to fall, crashed the jar into a thousand fragments. The blood the vessel had contained splashed wide, and spotted Hanun's face and raiment as he stood apart. A cry arose, for the helve of the hammer had broken, and the rough stone head of it, spinning with the force of the blow, had struck one of the nude watchers and had felled him to the ground. There was an end of the invocation, and one of the priests cried out upon Hanun, asking what should be done and what the omen might mean.

Hanun was silent, looking upon the waste and desolate places of his own spirit. It was as if a whirlwind raged in the desert: all was dark, confused, tormented, till a voice sounded within him like a clarion:

'The hammer of Hest is broken, and the reign of blood is over!'

He himself had spoken the words with a great cry, and they rang upon the ears of his body and his soul. The blood upon his face and hands stung like fire, and filled him with a nameless horror and repulsion. His heart had been knit through with cruelty and the lust of blood, and his recoil from them was like a rending of the flesh. The savour which had been sweetest to him was bitterer than wormwood, and the passion of his protest against himself that had been was like a convulsion.

The naked celebrants of the libation to Hest stared upon one another in the dim starlight, terrified by the omen and the cry which gave to it a significance so awful. Hanun turned away and left them to their consternation.

He was alone in the midst of the spaces of his soul. The storm raged there no more, and past the cloudy wrack the star of Peace gleamed with a steadfast lustre. And a new heart grew within him, like a little child's for softness, and like a warrior's for courage, and he remembered the words of David:

'Thou art he that shall carry the burthen I have borne.'

Then and there he cast himself upon his face in an ecstasy, and took the charge laid upon him, and set his past behind him for ever and his purpose before him for ever. And as he

moved to arise, filled with the sublime and simple faith and surety of old days, he was aware that his hands lay upon the breast of the dead saint, his forerunner and his father in the faith. He recalled David's prediction, 'I shall not see to-morrow's sun,' and he saw that it was fulfilled.

The hermit priest of Bel had struck true to the heart, and the poison of his blade had had no time to flow through the victim's veins. So the dead man lay with undisturbed form and face, as if gazing fixedly towards the new abode to which his valorous soul had flown. Hanun knelt beside him, and gazed long and earnestly at his face, peering close to it, reading the dead man's rest and peace.

'Thou knowest more than I,' he said at last, and indeed there shone in the dead man's eyes a very strange and awful look of knowledge of things hidden from the living.

When Vreda had listened to the last words of David, she moved away with inward heaviness and went to her own place. She had found a natural bower by the river side, where a weeping willow made a dome of green dense enough to afford shelter alike from the heat of the sun and the dews of the night. She slept well-guarded here, for night after night those who were drawn by the stories of the wonders of her presence, and those who came in the faith that she could heal their diseases, lay down about her abiding place to await her earliest issuing forth.

She passed now through the patient throng, women holding out their children to be blessed, and sufferers from many maladies crowding humbly to be touched for healing. Many, secretly touching her robe, had believed themselves cured and had spread abroad the report of her, so that nightly the crowd increased in numbers. But none dared to approach her resting place too near, and when she was weary of moving amongst them she could always withdraw to the solitude of her own leafy chamber and the privacy of her own thoughts. The kind hands healed many pains; the grave voice, celestial sweet, soothed many griefs; the new wisdom of the creed of pity and forgiveness sank deep into many hearts, wild, untutored, and stony, and lived there like well-springs in a desert.

She was weary in body and heart, but none went without the blessing or the counsel craved, and at last she was free to rest. She lay down upon a couch of heather to await what might happen, her mind expectant of intelligence. She was like one

who sits in a darkened chamber attending the coming of a lamp. There was no sorrow in her mind now because of her parting from David, but more and more a surety of an increased closeness of companionship. On a sudden the illumination she looked for came. It began with a warmth and sweetness of contentment the like of which she had not known, and she was aware of the immortal essence of her friend, himself, and not another, recognisable as a familiar face. There was no voice or touch, but the clothed spirit and the unclothed were together in a most dear and intimate communion, and Vreda was aware of a happiness and a glory not to be described by man.

Then, filled with a tranquil and sacred joy, she arose, and choosing by name six from amongst those who slept near her abiding place, she led them to where the body of David lay.

XVI.

In the early forenoon the great hall of the palace was cleared for judgment. A heavy stone chair of great antiquity was painfully moved in on rollers by a score of men and set near the northern wall. All implements of everyday use were cleared away, and at the appointed time the king, followed by his chiefs and counsellors, entered and took his seat, to hear petitions, to adjust disputes, and to ordain the punishment of criminals. Barxelhold sat by his side on a seat lower than his own, and the chiefs were grouped on rough oak benches on either hand. Those of greatest age sat nearest to the king, bald and furrowed and snowy-bearded, and on a block of granite polished by many centuries of handling, which was set at Feltor's feet, were laid the golden sickle (its haft thickly incrusting with black and grey British pearls) and the royal axe of flint in token of the king's mastership over life and death. Without the hall, and apart from the rest of the soldiery, there stood three men beside a block of oak. One of them bore a battle axe, ready, if need were, to carry out the edict of the king.

An aged counsellor, standing behind the king's chair, spoke at a signal from Feltor's hand. 'The king sits in judgment.' A chieftain waiting at the open door repeated the words, and voice after voice took up the phrase outside until it melted into distance. Complainants and petitioners besieged the door, and were one by one admitted by the guard.

But one case had been heard when Hanun presented himself

and demanded audience. He had laid aside the white robe of office, with its scarlet band of dignity, and came bare-headed and bare-footed, and attired in such a mantle of coarse wool as David had worn. The change in his face since last he had set foot upon that ground was yet more astonishing than the change in his attire. The suave malignity had gone out of it, and it was alight with fervour and sincerity. He strode along the hall unrecognised for a moment, and stood before the king.

'Who art thou?' Feltor demanded, though even as his lips shaped the words he knew him.

'Hanun'—came the answer—'the son of Soel, and youngest and least worthy of the servants of the Redeemer.'

Since Bel's day many conversions had been known: the king himself was tacitly a Christian; Barxelhold wavered between two opinions, and but for the fact that she recoiled from publicly opposing her own father, would have decided; Roedweg and all his house had openly embraced the faith, and many of the chieftains had followed his example. But until now the new creed had met with the deadly and passionate hostility of the priesthood, and Hanun's speech so astounded all who heard it that the king and queen and the assembled counsellors rose in wonder.

'Thou?' cried Feltor, 'thou? The Priest of the Terrors?'

'Yea, king,' answered Hanun. 'Even I. These hands, foul with the blood of unholy sacrifice, are cleansed. I, unworthy, am called and chosen, and though it lead me to the scourge, the block, or the fire, I take the road by which God leads me, and bear the burthen my dead master hath laid down.'

'Thy dead master!'

'Yea,' said Hanun. 'David is dead.'

'Dead?' cried Feltor, gazing about him as if to seek for a denial of the news. There was a profound and anxious silence. 'How?' the king demanded.

'He was slain last night,' Hanun answered. 'But a little while earlier he foretold his death, though not the manner of it.'

The king's eyes rested on Hanun with a swift suspicion. What if he were the murderer, and his conversion a pretence to hide the truth and save himself from vengeance! The thought stayed but an instant, and Feltor glared about him in kingly wrath.

'It shall go ill,' he said, 'with him that hath done this. Said I not that whosoever should touch the man to his hurt should die?'

As he spoke the guard at the door divided and made way for the entrance of Wenegog, who, followed by a long and imposing procession of priests, walked solemnly into the hall and faced the seat of judgment. He and his followers were in the full priestly panoply which was only assumed on occasions of high ceremonial.

At Wenegog's entrance Barxelhold turned, and gripped Feltor by the arm. Her husband looked down upon her and saw both fear and appeal in her eyes.

'Thinkest thou so?' he said, grimly. 'I also.' Then he kept silence until Wenegog stood before him, with his priestly forces marshalled in the rear. 'What wouldst thou here?' he asked.

Wenegog drew himself to his height, and stretched out a trembling hand. His face was white like wax, and his eyes had grown cavernous.

'I, Wenegog, voice of Odan and Bel, after fasting and vigil, and wounds made of mine own hands in prayer, warn thee, with this last warning. Bel is wroth with hunger, and his inwards are like a heated furnace of brass. He roareth for his due, which hath so long been denied him.'

'And shall be denied him for ever,' cried Feltor. He trembled, half with rage against Wenegog and half with the last remnant of a superstitious fear. He had longed often of late to break from the ghastly bonds of the creed in which he had been cradled, and that lingering fear had alone withheld him. Now that the words had been spoken he waited with one icy pang of fear to see what would befall him. Then the despised deity taking no vengeance he gathered courage. 'Cram Bel's maw with the men of thine own bloodthirsty craft if thou wilt! I am sick of thy burnings and slayings, and so long as the king's word goes through the land there shall be an end of them.'

Wenegog fixed his eyes upon Feltor's, and held them there unwinkingly.

'Moerwen,' he called. 'Come hither.'

He waited, staring at the king, with his right hand outstretched, and there fell such a silence on the place that the bare feet of the priest who obeyed the arch-druid's call were heard clearly on the earthen floor, and the rustle of his raiment as he moved. The priest paused at his master's side, and held out towards him a delicate phial of crystal. Wenegog's hand felt blindly for it, and still he kept his eyes on Feltor's. His long fingers touched the phial and gripped it, and raising it high he

reversed it, and poured its contents on the ground. The king held his place, but his countenance changed and he was red and pale by turns. His broad chest heaved with a convulsive labour.

‘The gods waste thy life,’ said Wenegog, ‘as I waste this!’

He let fall the phial, which crashed into a hundred glittering fragments, and dropped his hand slowly to his side.

Hanun had stood, unobserved by his old master, a little to the rear. His mean garb had disguised him so far that, though he was recognised by many of his old comrades, Wenegog had not even glanced at him. He came forward now and spoke:

‘Have no fear. His curse is waste like the water he hath wasted. His word leaveth less trace than the wind.’

‘By the gods,’ said Wenegog, turning upon him in amazement, ‘’tis Hanun!’

There was the beginning of a stir in the hall, and at a single gesture from Feltor’s hand it broke into a wild commotion. The king’s defiance of the arch-druid, and the solemn anathema by which Wenegog had replied, and—heaped on these—Hanun’s challenge of the curse, had brought the blood of the listeners and onlookers to fever heat. Feltor choked with rage, and could do no more than thrust a commanding hand towards Wenegog at the instant when Roedweg’s eye encountered his own.

Roedweg strode from his place, and the druids grouped themselves about their head to oppose him. The swords of the armed men were out on every side, and there was the flash of steel among the ranks of the priests also, but at the mere sight of the grim resolute face of Roedweg, and the long sword he bore, the druids faltered. He went straight on, disdainful of them, shouldering right and left, not deigning to look as if he so much as dreamed of their resistance. But one more daring or more faithful than the rest faced him and struck out. Roedweg felled him with a tremendous buffet from the iron hilt of his sword, and the trenchant blade, whistling right and left, cleared a space about him. The chieftains and the guard cast themselves upon the circle, and in the turn of a hand the crowd of priests was disarmed. Roedweg, seizing Wenegog by the nape of the neck, forced him to the foot of the judgment seat, and there thrust him upon his knees before the king.

‘Wilt curse the king?’ said Feltor hoarsely. ‘Seest whither thy power hath gone, Wenegog?’

Barxelhold threw herself between him and the kneeling figure of her father, and clung to Feltor by the wrists.

'Be not afraid!' he said. 'I will not harm him. Stand aside. Thy fangs are broken, old adder! Let him rise, Roedweg.'

Wenegog, released, arose, shaking from head to foot with anger and feebleness of body. His robe was torn, and spotted here and there with blood, for he had knelt upon the fragments of the broken phial. He stood undaunted, and there was more of majesty in his look than in Feltor's.

'I have spoken to thee already,' he said, and turned away. 'For the rest of ye, take refuge beneath your mushroom faith if ye will. Call on the scourged outcast of the Nazarenes, and the voice of Odan shall answer. Yet not of mine accord will I leave ye to doom. Is Odan of yesterday? See ye the very axe that lieth before the chair of judgment? Seven score and nine are the generations of the kings and queens in Coerlea since Coer, the son of Odan, gave the axe to Leng, the father of kings, and the Coerleans became a people. Where is the faith of old days? The men that went before ye raised a grove to Odan, and nine generations died ere the oaks were grown. Was it yesterday that Moedek, the son of Bel, built the ring of the gods and the ring of life about the ring of sacrifice? Nay, but ye know that no man can remember a tale of the time when the rings were not. For mine own part I am old, and ere long shall I meet them that have gone before into Eanhola. When the hour cometh I can stand before them without shame, for I have spoken.'

He swept his robe about him, and glancing at Hanun with a smile of unutterable disdain, made a step towards the doorway.

'Stay!' said Feltor. 'I have yet a word for thee. What of David?'

Wenegog paused, turned his head, and smiled upon the king. Then he moved on again, but Roedweg's heavy hand arrested him.

'What know I of David?' he asked.

'David is slain,' said Feltor, 'and I demand a reckoning for his blood at thy hands.'

'Why at my hands?' asked Wenegog, turning back upon the king.

'Wert his enemy,' returned Feltor, 'and hast command of thine own men! I will have thee reckon for his blood.'

'Show me mine accuser,' said the druid, looking haughtily about him.

'Hanun,' said Feltor, 'tell what is known to thee, and no more.'

'Hanun?' cried Wenegog mockingly. 'The carrion crow bethinketh him that he will feed no more on the offal the eagle leaveth. Come not too nigh, though thou thinkest the eagle stricken. There is yet a grip in the talons.'

'Have done with this,' Feltor exclaimed stormily. 'Speak, Hanun, I command thee.'

'I am weary,' said Wenegog. 'I tell thee, Feltor, I know naught of David, and care naught. And if he be slain I grieve not nor rejoice.'

A voice spoke beside him:

'Lie not to the king.'

He turned and faced Vreda. In his every encounter with her he had been confounded, and from the moment when he had first beheld her his power had begun to slip from his hands. He held now the last rag and remnant of it, but the very fact of her presence inspired him to cling to it with a more desperate tenacity.

'What can she know?' he asked himself.

'All,' she answered him aloud. The word was an enigma to those who stood about them, but Wenegog staggered as though a hand had struck him. 'Thine innermost heart!'

His mind flashed to the sacred grove and the meeting with the hermit-priest of Bel. She set in words the picture that he saw.

'Night in the grove, and the loathly thing that tempteth thee. "Wilt have thy will?" "Who will not when he may? Thou knowest the man?" "Ay! David the Blasphemer. Speak the word." "The word is spoken."'

Even to the listeners the accusation was clear, and when Vreda ceased to speak a prodigious weight of silence seemed to fall. To Wenegog the voice was a living echo to his thought, and to be thus translated unloosed his joints with fear. That the tale she hinted should be merely true was nothing. He could have faced it with a lie. But that she should touch his very fancy and speak the words that rang in his own brain chilled his blood, and unhinged his wits with horror.

'What can a lie avail?' she asked. The next scene darted into the light cast by the circle of his thoughts, and stood there, horribly defined. The voice of the ghastly creature spoke, and his own voice answered it. The living voice still tracked the inward tones, and still translated them.

'The grove, and the loathly thing again. "None escape from it, and I struck deep." "None escape from it?"'

'The body will betray me,' thought Wenegog.

'Yea,' she answered. 'His body will betray thee, though thou saidest he would tell no tales.'

Wenegog fell upon his knees with a cry. His veined hands writhed in the air.

'Mother of the gods! Most holy There, protect me. It is thy daughter.'

'Nay,' she said, 'I am no daughter of There.'

'I am slain already,' he thought. 'To what tortures will Feltor set me? My powers are broken and I am a mockery to them that served me.'

'Perchance it may yet be well for thee that thou should'st become a mockery,' she answered, for his thoughts were like spoken words to her. 'Yet Feltor will set thee to no tortures.'

With such an abject surrender of all hope and courage as men know in dreams he rose and fled from her with groping hands and staggering feet. No man dared to arrest him. There was that in his face which would have made a passage through an army. Yet when those who remained behind were free of the horror of his eyes the silence gave way to tumult, and half the crowd would have poured headlong after him but for Vreda's restraining hand. She did but raise it and the tumult sank again.

'Are not his thoughts his chastisement?' Her voice calmed all anger and revenge. 'Let him go.'

A sense of triumph swelled in Hanun's heart. His repentance for the past was a part of him, and he knew that it must be so until the day when he should die, but it had grown into a power which drove him forward. Fired by faith and scourged by memory as he was, and changed in heart, he kept his old powers, his keenness of perception, his adroitness and his promptitude. He saw that now was the hour in which to strike a final and a fatal blow at that pitiless creed which he had himself so long upheld.

'Let no man seek for vengeance,' he cried aloud. 'Let there be no more blood-shedding nor torture. But one thing would I pray of the king to do, in memory of his own mercy. Let the figure of Bel threaten the land no more. Let it be given to these hands, which have been swift to shed the blood of the innocent, to pull down the terror that casteth its cold shadow on the hearts of men.'

‘Be it so,’ Feltor answered. ‘Burn it with fire, and let a plough be passed over the place whereon it standeth.’ He turned to Vreda and knelt before her. ‘Since thy coming there hath been gladness where sorrow went before. Thy voice hath brought joy, and thy presence is the healing of strife. Whence thou comest I know not, but I know that whither thou ledest no harm can come to any. Thy faith shall be my faith. I will praise the one God and none other, and they who love their king will follow me. Speak, and that which thou commandest we will do.’

‘Do as thou hast said, Feltor,’ she answered him. ‘Tear down the figure of Bel and the stones about it, that it may be a sign to all men that the days of blood are over.’

Feltor sprang to his feet and cried with a loud voice :

‘Follow me !’

As the evening shadows gathered the fire glowed under the huge misshapen wicker figure, and the flames leapt in and out among the twisted withes. For the first time since the mock-human thing had burned no cry of victims mingled with the crackling noise of the fire. The inner circle swarmed with men, women, and children, and at the foot of every stone men with implements of every kind, chosen at random, slaved to destroy and level the symbols of their former faith. They were more zealous in the flush of the new faith than ever they had been for the old. There needed but one voice of authority to be raised, and all were ready in defiance of the creed which had slain and tortured time out of mind.

The fire flamed out and the dreadful symbol sank in ashes, but the fire of fervour burned all night and for many a day and night thereafter. Stone after stone was levelled, and many were broken. Those of the centre circle were dislodged and set up in a heap over the ploughed circle of fire, and in their midst on the thirty-second day from the beginning of the work a gigantic cross was raised.

On that thirty-second day Hanun held solemn service, and to the gathered thousands streaming homewards the final image of the night was that of the symbol of peace and pardon, seen afar against the sunset brightness of the sky.

XVII.

THE evening sun was shining, and a soft fine rain was falling, and a rainbow rising from the green of the far-off hills sprang to the height of its arch and there broke on skyey blue and fleecy cloud. A solitary personage, habited in the British fashion, with the thong-tied loose skin leggings of the Caernabians, climbed an eminence, and from its summit looked about him over a broad and beautiful expanse of country. He shaded his eyes with a delicate hand, well trimmed and fine, and turned him about slowly, scanning the landscape on every side.

'A goodly land,' he said half aloud, 'but no joy to be lost in it, and never a sign of a road. If yonder river should be navigable—a river must needs lead somewhere—and a raft is easily made.'

He spoke in Latin, and his whole aspect belied his attire; his beard of but a month's growth curling jet black and close about his mouth, cheeks, and chin, his large southern eyes, and the olive tint of his complexion. When he had stood awhile to look about him he moved towards the further base of the hill, forcing his way through dense undergrowth and many thickets of briars. The descent in places was precipitous, and he was more than once compelled to use as a staff the short spear he carried. Coming at length to the edge of the stream he looked down upon a rocky bed strewn with boulders and clear shining round pebbles, parti-coloured like an intricate mosaic. The bank on which he stood was high and sheer, but on the other side a grassy lawn, dotted with clumps of willow, and ridged with beds of alder and osier, sloped to the stream. The fine rain had already ceased to fall, and the rainbow in the east had faded from the sky, but still planted a prismatic transparent buttress upon the hill from which it had seemed to spring.

As he stood leaning over the edge of the bank, clinging to the trunk of a young ash, and thrusting half his body out of thick boscage, he became aware of voices, and retired with scarce a rustle. The voices were softly bright, and beyond a doubt feminine. They came nearer, speaking in a language which he followed with difficulty, and for a mere instant he caught a glimpse of two girls of lofty stature and much freedom and grace of movement, who passed a break in one of the osier beds. Then he lost sight of them, and the voices became stationary. The listener

could catch here and there the meaning of a phrase of their speech, which differed chiefly in accent from that dialect of the Caernabians with which he was familiar. By-and-by they emerged from their shelter with shrill laughter, and he, peering out again from his hiding-place, saw them enter the stream at a still deep reach below the boulders. For a minute or more they beat the water against each other with their hands, with voluble chatter and shriekings, and then one plunging into the middle of the stream the other followed, and they glanced hither and thither like a brace of nereids. From the foot to the knee, and from the shoulder to the finger-tip these water maidens were nut-brown with the free play of sun and wind, but their supple bodies flashed white and rosy under the wave. As they swam about the still pool their reddish-yellow hair trailed loose behind, swaying into wreaths as they turned, and no sculptor ever caught and perpetuated poses of more natural grace than they displayed at every motion and at every instant of transition.

The onlooker drew cautiously nearer to the edge, and surrendered his hold upon the slim trunk which had hitherto supported him. He was unaware of the treacherous nature of the ground he stood on, and before he had even time to be surprised he had fallen into a deep well-like pool in company with a cubic yard of earth or thereabouts. The maidens, startled by the splash, looked for its cause, and by-and-by saw a pair of struggling arms and then a bare head with close cropped hair, black as night, and gleaming like an otter's. They made one swift stroke for the shore and fled to their first shelter, with clamorous shrillings which betokened more amusement than fear.

The unwilling intruder, unable to make way out of the well by any other means, climbed upon one of the great boulders and surveyed the height from which he had fallen. To climb back was clearly impossible, and so after fishing out his dripping head-dress and the spear which floated blade downwards within easy reach, he half swam, half waded, to the further side. A burst of laughter warned him of the whereabouts of the girls. He skirted a bunch of pollards and came in sight of them, finding them already robed each in a single girth of soft white wool, reaching from the shoulder to the knee. They stood side by side, laughing frankly, and writhing the water from their auburn hair. He had already prepared his most polished phrases of reassurance, but the damsels were so assured already that he had no need for the employment of his inventions. So they stood regarding each

other, he smiling, and the girls laughing with an air which began to take something of a hoydenish coquetry to his eyes.

'I trust, fair dames,' he said, vainly striving to force his southern tongue to the rugged fashion of the language of the Caernabians, 'that I am no cause of fear unto you.'

At this they opened their blue eyes and laughed afresh, and said one to the other :

'He hath made no gain of fairness for his washing.'

He did not quite catch the meaning of the words, but he guessed that it was not altogether complimentary, and since it had happened in his day that many great ladies of many lands had been mightily impressed by his graces, and that more than one poet of Rome had sung of his conquering of hearts, he was a little piqued by the reception these rustic barbarian beauties offered him. But he was far too fine a gentleman to permit his pique to show itself, and far too used to conquest to be greatly disconcerted.

'Your mockeries make you the pleasanter to look upon,' he said in his soft Roman accent, 'and I rejoice to have chanced upon ladies so beautiful. Will it please you tell me where lieth Surfled?' One of the girls stretched out a noble brown arm and pointed. 'Ay,' he said, 'and where Caerwen?' She pointed again. 'Ay! And yonder Caerlheon?'

She assented by a movement of the head.

'I am a huntsman that hath lost his way,' he went on with a courtly smoothness, in no manner abated by the difficulties of the strange tongue he spoke. 'And I have not only lost my way, but my people. One thing I have found—a most strong hunger; and if ye be not the goddesses of this stream, as by your beauty ye well might be—but mortal like myself—I pray ye guide me where I may find food, or point me the way that I shall go.'

Now the water maidens had grown from infancy to full womanhood in a land where even lovers spoke but little in compliment, and they found the southern method by no means displeasing. The stranger was handsome, and despite the smoothness of his tongue, had a valiant and manly air. So the damsels laughed less broadly, and fell into something of a pleasing confusion at the assured confidence of this polished personage.

'Aelfa,' said one of them to the other, 'he sayeth that he is hungry.'

'There is venison and honey and bread in plenty,' said the other.

'A feast for the gods,' cried the stranger.

With a sign to him to follow the girls moved away with titterings, whispers, and backward glances. They led him for a time by the river side, and then diverging plunged into a pathway which ran through an undergrowth with great isolated trees in it. As they pursued their road the trees grew thicker, and at length the track was over-arched by interlacing branches, through which the light struck but faintly. Then, after ten score yards, they came upon a hill-side before which a little clearing had been made, and there against a square face of rock a stone hut had been built. At first it seemed no more than a projecting nodule from the rock, the hand of nature had so covered it. Flowering creepers trailed from the low roof to the ground, and the interstices of the stonework were filled in with mosses, grass, and ferns. A screen of wattle covered with tanned skins served as a door, but was now thrust aside.

The stranger stood for an instant to look at this retired dwelling-place, eyeing it with the soldier's instinct of enquiry, when faint and far away a horn sounded a peculiar call. The girls turned and listened, and their new-found guest set a small horn of silver to his lips and blew an answer with the same inflections. There was an interval of silence, and then the distant call sounded again like a perfect echo. He repeated it—awaited the answer, which sounded somewhat nearer—and again repeated it. Then, as he threw the horn back over his shoulder to the position from which he had drawn it, a voice spoke behind him:

'Roman? What doth a Roman in Coerlea?'

He turned, and saw standing in the doorway a man of extreme old age, with a pure white beard which swept below his girdle, and white hair flowing over his shoulders—a man of lofty stature, staring straight before him with sightless blue eyes. His delicate veined hands were stretched forward a little, and their gesture was as eloquent of blindness as the eyes themselves.

Varonius—for it was he—looked at the old man with a momentary surprise. Why a blind man who had not heard him speak should be able to identify his nationality went beyond him.

'Roman?' he asked; 'why Roman?'

'I know the call,' the old man answered.

'The call?' said Varonius. 'Why shouldst think the call to be Roman? I have dwelt in and about Caerlleon these three years, and never heard it amongst the soldiery.'

'Hast heard it in Rome,' the blind old man responded, with a touch of scorn at the evasion. 'It is the call of the Prætorian Guard. I know thy cities, and their dungeons. What doest here in Coerlea?'

'I came hither after the chase,' replied Varonius.

'If thou comest for war,' said the old man with a sigh, 'my fighting days are over, and I can do naught to stay thee. But if thou comest for peace, art welcome.'

'I come in peace,' Varonius replied.

The call sounded nearer, and he answered it yet once more.

XVIII.

WENEGOG sat in the innermost chamber of his dwelling, his head bowed upon his hands, and his sandalled feet stirring idly in the pungent dust of the floor, where the odorous southernwood carpet, long neglected and unrenewed, had fallen into dryness and decay. The thoughts of his heart were nauseous to him, and by times it seemed that the things which had befallen him were too bitter to be true. The circle of the gods which had been from the beginning and should have stood for ever was broken and destroyed, his own child had forsaken him, men who had obeyed him from their infancy, without so much as daring to question, now mocked his authority and derided him. His soul protested in an impotent passion of incredulity, like some wild beast caged who will not recognise the bars that hold him and breaks himself against them.

In the larger chamber were gathered the four or five score who followed the fallen fortunes of their chief. These were mainly men whom he had but little regarded, but were made of unpliant unyielding stuff, and were one and all filled with a sullen rage of devotion. They made a motley crowd. All were armed to the teeth, and the frailest fanatic among them was as ready to fight, if but the chance should be given him, as the lustiest and youngest. Some of them had clamoured to be led against the nation, and to strike one despairing blow and die in striking it; but Wenegog, even in the midst of his despair, could still muster his politic wits, and would not wholly waste the little power that was left to him. Something might chance—he knew not what. The gods had worked miracles in the old days. Why not again?

One temptation had assailed him often, but he had shrunk

from yielding to it. The aged Coermdalhu, descendant of Coer, the son of Odan, had never failed in prophecy, and could at least lift the veil and show the things that should be. But Wenegog and the prophet-bard had parted more than five-and-thirty years ago, when the arch-druid in his cruelty and ambition had claimed Coermdalhu's youngest son as a sacrifice to Hest. The old man had surrendered the boy uncomplainingly, and had given him to the gods in absolute faith, but he had never borne to look upon the face of Wenegog again. That the blood of one of the line of Odan should be shed to appease the wrath of an inferior deity seemed an outrage to the god of gods, his ancestor. He endured it, but he retired from communion with men, and dwelt alone until the death of his remaining son left two infant children to his charge.

When Temb, the elder of the two, had been chosen by Wenegog as one of the officiating maidens who had represented the seven daughters of There at the mutilated sacrifice to Bel, the arch-druid had hoped for some approach to reconciliation with the aged bard, but the strange breaking-off of the ceremony had frustrated his desire.

There was no faintest shadow of doubt in the druid's mind that Coermdalhu, if he chose, could tell him the ending of his career, and he brooded over his own longing until at last he could bear with it no longer. He would go, and if need were he would kneel to know the truth.

Once resolved he arose, and, facing his followers in the larger chamber, told them of his decision.

'If he speak of the worst we can but die, and if his vision bid us be of courage we will live for the gods.'

They met him with an instant faith, and the walls of the hollowed rock echoed to their cries and the clanking of axe, and spear, and shield. He bade a score of them follow him, and led the way.

They marched for the space of six hours, and towards nightfall came to the bank of a stream, where Wenegog bade them halt and went on alone. He had not walked a mile when the tones of a low and plaintive music reached his ears, and he came upon the woodland fastness in which Coermdalhu lived. The bard sat at the doorway, unconscious of Wenegog's presence, his fingers straying amid the harp strings, his sightless eyes turned upwards towards the fading flecks of sunlit cloud in the west.

'Coermdalhu, child of Odan,' said Wenegog.

The old man's fingers hushed the vibrating strings, and he sat with unchanged attitude.

'Who calls?'

The druid's mind had been much buffeted to and fro since the beginning of his journey. Now he would surrender all his pride to know that which he desired, and now he would disdain to stoop, even though he should rest in ignorance. Even as he spoke he was newly resolved upon humility, but at the sound of his own voice he woke to a cold and settled arrogance. It was still his right to command among the faithful.

'I, Wenegog, warden for Odan and There,' he answered.

'Why comest thou to me?' the old man demanded, 'That which thou didst ask was given.'

'I spoke but the will of Hest,' returned Wenegog,

'What askest now?'

'The word of the gods. Their will is before thee, like signs graven upon a wall, which men of learning may interpret. Look and see, and tell what thou seest.'

His tone was that of command, and not of supplication.

'There is naught between thee and me,' Coermdalhu answered. 'And I am old, and this frail body is no longer a fit abiding place for the thoughts of the gods.'

He bent his unseeing gaze upon his visitor, and once more his hands strayed over the harp strings and awaked a subdued and mournful music.

'The land is accursed,' cried Wenegog. 'The people are gone after a strange god who will have no sacrifice. The rings of the gods are broken, and the axe hath been laid to their grove. There is left but a handful of the faithful. And I, servant of Odan, bid thee, servant of Odan:—Smite the darkness with the light of thy vision—break open the sealed womb of future time, and declare the things that are to come. Do the gods leave us for ever, or shall we have vengeance of our enemies? Look and see, and speak that thou seest.'

The seer's countenance changed, and he sat awhile like one wrapt from the knowledge of common things. Then his hands were laid upon the harp, and drew out of it a regal measure, stately and slow at the beginning, but moving quicker as it proceeded, and rising at last to a wild and half discordant storm of sound. It fell from this to a low wail of supplication and desire, and quavered down to silence. Then it rose again more passionate and clamorous than before, an ecstasy and transport of beseeching.

The light was fading fast, and ere the strain closed the bard's face was hidden by the shadows. His hands fell abruptly in the midst of an unfinished cadence and he drooped forward, leaning upon his harp. The echo lingered on the trembling murmuring strings, and died by imperceptible degrees.

'What is it thou hast seen?' Wenegog asked when he could bear the weight of silence no longer.

'Nothing,' the bard answered him. 'The gods are hidden in darkness.'

'What voice hath spoken?'

'None. The gods are dumb.'

'Strive again, son of Odan,' cried the druid, falling upon his knees. 'I commanded where I should have prayed. Strive again. I kneel before thee, who have knelt only to the gods.'

Coermdalhu smote one chord, and again let fall his hands.

'It is dark,' he said. 'It is dark.'

Wenegog knelt in an extremity of anguish, and only an accidental touch of the old man's fingers on the strings broke the silence.

'Farewell, Coermdalhu,' he said after a pause. 'We were friends ere the voice of Hest severed us.' Stoic as he was, his own vast self-pity broke him down, and his voice trembled.

The bard gave him no answer, and he moved away. The forest path lay in darkness, but he paced it mechanically as though he were familiar with every turn and winding. The murmur of water and the dim gleam of the twilight sky reached him together, and he sat down upon a rocky ledge above the river, and grew deaf and blind and empty, not caring for anything or thinking of anything, or being sorry or afraid or weary, but falling into that momentary death in life which lies in the lowermost gulf of despair.

How long he sat thus he knew not, but he awoke after a time to the sense of light and sound. The moon had risen, and the stream glittered in its light. There were voices near him, and when his wits took cognisance of them he knew that they had been speaking there for some time. It was a certain sharpness and dryness of reproof in one of them which startled him awake. The other voice answered with an accent of remonstrance.

'Twas at thine asking, great Prefect. Thou art known already for a Roman, and if thou wert but known for Varonius thy life were not worth a drachma.'

The speech was couched in Latin, but for a moment the

listener was hardly aware of it. He was familiar with the language, though he knew it best in the mongrel and provincial form spoken by the soldiery of Deva and by the Lennians who traded with them.

'Here now for two days have we been in the heart of the land,' said the first voice, 'and have learned nothing. We have traced neither road nor river. Bethink thee, my good Helba. If I had sent thee upon this quest, and thou hadst come back to me after two days empty of head and hand, I might well have asked thee wherefore. Then if thou shouldst have answered that a blind harper knew thee for a Roman and fear overcame thee, I might have thought ill alike of thy courage and discretion.'

'Leave me to the work, Illustrious,' the other answered.

'I will see for myself. It is not my way to go back. The women hereabouts, if we have found but a fair sample, are better worth quarrying than the sorry lot we have at Deva. That strapping wench—the taller of the two—looked not unkindly at me. She would be an attraction behind the lattice at the Prefectorium.'

Here they moved away, and after a pause Wenegog stealthily followed until he heard the low challenge of a sentinel and the murmured answer Varonius gave. He could see the bivouacked group at a little distance, indistinct in the moonlight.

He saw the answer to all his prayers, the fulfilment of his longings. He had but to slay this Varonius here on Coerlean ground to bring the whole power of Rome in vengeance on the land. The gods had answered him. The chastisement of the blasphemers was secure, and the people would return to their primitive faith, scourged and humbled.

This idea once conceived seized his whole soul. He prowled through the undergrowth, and took note of the three sentries who guarded the bivouac north, east, and west. The little encampment was backed by the river, and the south side was already safe and needed no watching.

He knew how hopeless it would be to attack the encampment with the wild and untrained forces at his disposal. Whatever fanaticism could do his men were equal to, but he dreaded the Roman discipline and the Roman arms. Keen as he was he would ask for odds of three to one. He thought of Roedweg and a picked dozen of his band, and with them would have ventured anywhere; but Roedweg was his enemy, and twenty miles away.

Suddenly he bethought him of the admiration Varonius had

expressed for the granddaughters of Coermdalhu. He would use the girls to decoy the Roman to his destruction. Stealth and cunning should fill the place of force.

He walked back to the stone hut by the hillside, and found the blind bard still sitting there with his hands resting upon the harp and his head bowed upon his arms.

'Knowest thou whom thou hast here!' he demanded. 'Varonius, chief of the Romans in Caerlheon!'

'What is that to me?' asked the old man.

'I have heard him in speech with another,' said Wenegog. 'They are spying out the land for a new inroad.'

'They will fail as they have failed before,' replied Coermdalhu. The intelligence Wenegog brought left him unmoved, but at the next speech of the druid's he arose, alert and alive from head to foot.

'Why wait they here? They spake of Temb and Aelfa.'

'Spake of Temb and Aelfa? In what wise?'

'They spake of them as behind the lattice at the Prefectorium at Caerlheon.'

'Said I that my fighting days were over?' cried the old bard. 'I will slay him with my hands. The daughters of Odan play the wanton with this outer heathen?'

'Stay,' said Wenegog. 'Let the daughters of Odan lead the man who would defile them to his doom. A score of my men await hard by. Let the girls entice the Roman, and wherever they may lead him one of my men shall be ready.'

The old man for sole answer struck a chord upon the harp, and one of the girls ran from the inner chamber of the hut.

An hour later Wenegog's men were posted in the wood, and every score yards in a semicircle about the threatened bivouac there was a furtive flash of arms.

A noise of the measured beating of triangles tingled on the midnight air. Varonius lifted his head from its heathy pillow and listened. Two voices twined together, receded, touched, soared high, soared low. Helba, sleeping lightly by his captain's side, awoke at the sound and turned. The two kept silence for a time, and then at a pause in the hymn Helba spoke.

'They make good music in their invocation.'

'Whom is it they invoke?' asked Varonius in a laughing whisper. 'Thee and me? These are my water nymphs of this

afternoon. I tell thee, Helba, thou shalt not see such limbs betwixt Deva and Dorovernium.'

He arose and looked in the direction from which the sounds proceeded.

'Look, Helba,' he whispered. 'What are thy dancing stalls in Deva now?'

At but a little distance in the clear broad moonlight the two girls danced on the greensward to the music of their triangles and their singing. They swayed to and fro with a sliding and sinuous grace.

'This,' said Varonius, 'is too plain an invitation to be disregarded. Stay thou here, Helba. In a while I will have news for thee.'

Helba would have restrained him, but Varonius turned away with a good-humouredly imperious gesture. As he arose fairly to his feet the girls saw him. He advanced, and they receded, but so slowly that he came near to them. They fluttered to the edge of the wood, and then darted into the darkness. He saw the white robes flickering in the moonlight which fell in glimpses through the thick-set foliage, and followed on. The robes waved before him, guiding him, and when he was a bow shot within the wood, a huge axe swung down swift and sure, and clove him to the breast bone.

The man who had struck the blow raised a savage yell which was answered from a score of throats, and echoed far and wide over rock and stream and forest.

Helba sprang anew to his feet, and a voice cried hoarsely in his own tongue:

'You wait Varonius? Seek him here. Go home, and tell how free Coerlea meets the Roman spy.'

The wild cries rose again and again, and then dead silence fell.

(To be continued.)

At the Sign of the Ship.

DECEMBER used to be the time when people drank punch and told of ghosts and dreams. Ghosts have been caught into the great scientific movement lately. In M. d'Assier's book, 'Posthumous Humanity' (G. Redway), which Col. Olcott has translated, the terms of physical science are copiously applied to apparitions. Here we read about the 'Mesmeric Aura,' which explains a great many things: if one only knew what 'Mesmeric Aura' is. Here we find that sorcerers can really shift shapes, and crawl up to you like an innocent beast, and then pin you when you least expect it. Here we learn that the ghosts of men occasionally appear in the shapes of the lower animals, perhaps because they 'throw back' to some remote Darwinian ancestor. But not even Mr. Grant Allen, I think, will accept *this* Darwinian explanation, for who says that man was developed out of a cow? Yet one human ghost put on the form of a calf. In short, if M. d'Assier and Col. Olcott are correct, mythology is not a series of 'great palpable lies,' but a collection of valuable facts. Zeus did disguise himself as a man, and so forth. Vampires do exist, and merely continue the 'struggle for existence' after death. The way to tackle a vampire is to burn him, a new argument in favour of cremation. Prevention is better than cure, and, if all dead bodies were burned, why, there would be no vampires.

* * *

All this may be very curious and probable, though Col. Olcott has so many theories, any one of which would account for the phenomena, that the mind becomes a little perplexed in the choice of an hypothesis. The hypotheses, too, have the defect of not being verifiable. We need a new Pythagoras, who not only remembers what occurred to him in each phase of his metempsychosis, but can bring evidence to support his memory. Till he is found, I fear the speculations of the French positivist and

the gallant American colonel can only be regarded as amusing literature. So far they may safely be recommended.

* * *

Not all of us have seen vampires, nor even common ghosts, but all of us dream dreams. Mr. Louis Stevenson lately told a New York interviewer, what has already been published in this place, that he found dreams supply material for stories. He has two dream-stories in his portfolio, it appears, besides Jekyll and Hyde, who were children of dreams. The following vision of the night, which I have received from a correspondent, a young lady, does not help the novelist, but it may interest serious and theological minds. It reads like an allegory, and might be made use of in a tract, but it was only a wandering dream and visited an untheological pillow. Here it is:—

* * *

‘I dreamt one night that I had been appointed to meet and discuss with a Board of people the abolition of all existing religions. We assembled in a room, and at a table, on which I noticed small heaps of dust scattered about at intervals. My companions arranged themselves on one side of the table, and I took my place opposite them. “Our purpose for meeting here,” said the spokesman of the company, “is to examine every religion and to show you with what ease it can be dispelled. Here, for instance,” pointing to one of the dust-heaps, “is Buddhism. See how it goes, and leaves no trace behind,” and with his hand he brushed one corner of the table bare. And in a similar manner he demolished a number of other religions as represented by the mounds of dust, till only one remained, and for the first time I noticed that this, unlike the other heaps of dust, was covered with a fine white linen handkerchief. “Now,” continued the speaker, “we have successfully swept away all the various existing religions, with the exception of *this*, which we have still before us; we mean now to do away with it.” “So far,” I rejoined, “you have succeeded in your undertaking, but you will fail now, for what you propose doing is impossible. So long as the world endures, the belief in something supernatural must continue. You will find you cannot treat the last heap before you in the way you have done the others.” And I was not mistaken, for when an attempt was made to pull the handkerchief away, instead of sweeping off the dust with it, a small pool of

blood flowed out from beneath the covering and remained in the middle of the table, and do what they would, my fellows could not succeed in getting rid of it, for when they swept it away from one side of the table it only reappeared again, like a piece of quicksilver, on the other side. The attempt to remove it had finally to be given up. My opponents gave in, acknowledged that I had spoken truly, and I awoke satisfied.'—X.

* * *

Another lady writes:—‘A very common dream-experience of mine is that of producing verses, which are, no doubt, very admirable, but unfortunately not reproducible in waking hours. Perhaps, however, this circumstance is not so much to be regretted after all. It takes a Coleridge to dream a *Kubla Khan*. And in the few instances in which I have suddenly awakened in the middle of a poem, and could recall scraps of verse, these have happened to be peculiarly devoid of anything approaching to sense. Once, indeed, just before waking, a dream ran into the first lines of a lyric, afterwards completed and written down, which first lines were remembered after waking. But in this case I am not quite sure where the waking came in. Another, and most disagreeable dream, is that wherein you see in print some composition of your own, and are utterly unable to recognise it as yours. You find (perhaps under a familiar title) something you certainly do not remember to have written, and as often as not the most frightful nonsense. In this connection we may refer to the story of the man who dreamed that he had discovered the Secret of the Universe, and, waking on the instant, sprang up, in order to write it down before he should forget it, then lay down and peacefully went to sleep again. In the morning he looked to see what he had written, and behold, it was this :

*Walker with one leg, Walker with two !
Something to live for, something to do !*

* * *

We have had something too much of ‘Walker’ lately, whether as the Secret of the Universe or as a factor in politics.

* * *

Two other curious dreams, which visited the childlike slumbers of the present writer, may be worth mentioning. The first had one point in common with the vision of X. I dreamed that

I was a magician of the right sort, and that I had long been engaged in a conflict with another magician. He died, and was buried. But this was not the end of him. His vampire was as lively and hostile as ever he had been. In this distress, I sought the advice of another mage, who counselled me to open the coffin of my enemy, and pronounce the incantations which would raise his body, and then have it out with him as between man and man. So my friend and I opened the coffin and found it full of thin white dust. Over this we pronounced the incantations. It did not raise the body of the foe, but *the dust became full of blood!* Then I awoke, and was not sorry it was a dream. This, by the way, was long before the vision of X.

* * *

The other dream was pretty, and perhaps poetical. I seemed to be sitting on the side of a Scotch hill, on Yarrow I think, with a fairy lady of great beauty and charm. She instructed me that three times in my life she would appear to me, when I plucked a sprig of white heather. 'But do not pluck it for the third time,' she said, 'till your death is approaching, and then I will come to you, and be your guide and comfort through the lonely ways of Death.' So, in the dream, time went by: twice I had gathered the white heather, and twice seen the fairy lady. At last I was lying on the hill-side again, and by chance my idle hand broke a flower of white heather. Instantly she appeared, weeping, and told me that the last chance was wasted, and that I, like other men, must go alone down the ways of Death. Then she kissed me, and her immortal face was wet, and as cold as stone. 'So I awoke,' like Bunyan, regretting the fairy, who has never since come near me, waking or sleeping. This was many years ago.

* * *

Has anyone ever noticed a peculiar trick of Gibbon's prose, the trick which makes his style so monotonous? He finishes far too many sentences with a genitive case, if one may say so—with 'of' so and so. I open him absolutely at random, and find that, in consecutive sentences, the conclusion is 'the curiosity of the reader': 'a crowd of patients of the most eminent rank and most distant climates invited or visited the physicians of Salerno': 'the merit and value of a philosopher': 'the writings of the pupil of Avicenna': 'the praises and rewards of industry': 'the source of opulence and freedom': 'the supremacy of the Greek

emperor': 'objects of precious luxury.' Then a sentence ends 'to their ingenuity or good fortune,' and the next two sentences finish with 'the privileges of independent citizens,' and 'the palaces of royal merchants.' Thus, out of eleven sentences in one paragraph, and that the first one opens on, ten conclude in precisely the same form. The previous paragraph had five sentences, every one of them ending in the same manner. It seems curious that a writer so careful as Gibbon dropped unconsciously into such an overmastering habit. In a very long work doubtless the labour is lightened by running the thought into one mould of expression, but the result cannot but appear mechanical.

* * *

As a humble contributor to Mr. Gleeson White's curious little collection of ballades, rondeaus, villanelles and the rest, it would ill become me to criticise its choice and arrangement. A great deal of labour and thought has been given to this anthology, but a good many of the flowers are made of wax, or coloured paper. It seems a pity that an American *balladiste* should style a poem 'Vis Erotis,' and make 'Adonais' rhyme to 'days.' On the whole, these ancient French forms seem decidedly most serviceable for light and humorous verse. There is very little poetry that can be cast in these quaint moulds, and genuine poets have used them very seldom. If a poet has his heart in what he is saying, he will seldom find that the ballade or villanelle serves his turn. Mr. Austin Dobson, who is the master in these matters, keeps other vehicles for emotion: the 'forms' rather suit curious moods than serve to express earnest sentiment. They can be quaint, playful, a little wistful, and they can be marvellously ingenious, as in some of Mr. Henley's astonishing, fluent, and rapid experiments. The rondeau can be a little more serious; the double rondeau is tedious, but there is a charming pretty triolet of Miss Mary Robinson's:

'What can heal a broken heart?'

that has a kind of Elizabethan ring and natural melody. One expects least from the triolet, but examples by Mr. Robert Bridges, and one by the author of the following ballade, are among the really poetical things in the collection.

* * *

Can anyone tell me where to find the whole legend of Mr. Warburton's Cook, 'that unhappy Betty Barnes,' who burned and

otherwise slowly destroyed a large collection of old quarto plays and MSS., many of them unique? There is a list of them in the *Gentleman's Magazine*; they include Shakspeare's *Henry I.*, *Henry II.* (where fair Rosamond must have appeared), and *King Stephen*. Sir Walter Scott, in the introduction to *The Fortunes of Nigel*, tells us that he had an interview with the ghost of Betty. On this hint, and not forgetful of Bagford, the shoemaker, who used to break up books, nor of Omar the Caliph, sings the *balladiste*.

BALLADE OF BETTY BARNES, THE BOOK-BURNER.

Where is that baleful maid
 Who Shakspeare's quartos shred?
 Whose slow diurnal raid
 The flames with *Stephen* fed?
 Where is *Duke Humphrey* sped?
 Where is the *Henries'* book?
 They all are vanishèd
 With Betty Barnes the Cook!

And now her ghost, dismayed,
 In woful ways doth tread—
 (Though once the grieving shade
 Sir Walter visited)—
 Where culprits sore bestead,
 In dank or fiery nook,
 Repent their deeds of dread
 With Betty Barnes the Cook.

There Bagford's evil trade
 Is duly punishèd;
 There fierce the flames have played
 Round Caliph Omar's head:
 The biblioclastic dead
 Have diverse pains to brook,
 'Mid rats and rainpools led
 With Betty Barnes the Cook!

ENVOY.

Caxton! Be comforted,
 For those who wronged thee—look!
 They break affliction's bread
 With Betty Barnes the Cook!

GRAHAM R. TOMSON.

What a brilliant invention it is of an American journalist's—the story that the Emperor of Germany has long been dead, that he is represented by a harmless old gentleman, and that Prince Bismarck keeps Kaisers in relays, who die off and peacefully succeed each other. It is clever, but it is, as usual, a plagiarism. The idea is Captain Hawley Smart's, in *The Great Tontine*, a very diverting novel. 'No need such kings should ever die!' says the harmless revolutionist in *Pippa Passes*. No need any king or kaiser should ever die, on the plan wildly assigned to Prince Bismarck. Perhaps, truly constitutional monarchy could best be secured by the legal fiction that the king never dies, and by appointing a succession of pretenders over ninety. The difficulty and expense of keeping up a royal family would thus be got rid of, and a harmless and venerable figurehead would be secured without extra expense. A few suits of uniform, which each monarch would take on from his predecessor, plenty of gruel, and, perhaps, a little snuff, would suffice to keep an empire in working order.

A. LANG.

The 'Donna.'

THE EDITOR begs to acknowledge the receipt of the following sums:—S. A. A., 10l.; A. K. L., 20s.; Y. A., 20s.; E., 10s.; L. M. N., 2s. 6d.; Jean, 10s.; J. D., Kensington, 5s.; A. M. G., 10s.; Miss Anne Stewart, 5s.; Bee, 7s. 6d.

The Annual Statement of Account, and Report of the year's work (which has this year been unusually heavy), will appear in the January number.—ED.

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The Editor requests that his correspondents will be good enough to write to him informing him of the subject of any article they wish to offer, before sending the MS. A stamped and addressed envelope should accompany the MS. if the writer wishes it to be returned in case of non-acceptance. The Editor can in no case hold himself responsible for accidental loss. All communications should be addressed to

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